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Eradication of poverty and other development issues

Implementation of the Second United Nations Decade for the Eradication of Poverty (2008-2017)

Report of the Secretary-General

Summary

The present report, which is submitted pursuant to General Assembly resolution 69/234, discusses the progress of efforts to eradicate poverty and examines the challenges — such as low agricultural productivity, high unemployment, rising inequality, social exclusion, economic crises and the impacts of climate change — faced by countries engaged in these efforts. The report also presents an overview of the recent activities undertaken by the United Nations system to implement the inter-agency system-wide plan of action for poverty eradication; and highlights key policy measures that have proved effective in reducing poverty. The final section of the report offers recommendations for consideration by the Assembly.

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I. Introduction

1. The Second United Nations Decade for the Eradication of Poverty (2008-2017) has made important contributions to facilitating normative discussions centred around the imperative of poverty eradication, with a focus on full employment and decent work for all. Within the broader global development agenda encapsulated in the Millennium Development Goals and reflected in the formulation of the post-2015 development agenda, the Decade has provided countries with a framework within which to tackle poverty in all its dimensions and share national experiences, and has also served as an effective platform for the United Nations system with respect to focusing and coordinating its development efforts in support of national initiatives aimed at eradicating poverty.

2. The present report examines the progress achieved in eradicating poverty and the challenges faced by countries in their efforts to eradicate extreme poverty and create decent work opportunities for all. The report focuses particular attention on the challenge faced by Africa and the least developed countries. It also highlights both key policy measures that have proved effective in reducing poverty and activities undertaken by the United Nations system to implement the inter-agency system-wide plan of action for poverty eradication.

II. Progress in eradicating poverty

A. Global income poverty

3. With two years remaining in the Second United Nations Decade for the Eradication of Poverty and with the 2015 deadline for achieving the Millennium Development Goals now upon us, it is appropriate to note that considerable progress has been made in reducing poverty. Levels of poverty have dropped in all regions. In particular, the world has met the target of cutting the global rate of extreme poverty to half its 1990 level. The number of people living in extreme poverty fell from 1.9 billion to 835.5 million in the period from 1990 to 2015. The proportion of the world's population living on less than $1.25 a day had declined to 11.5 per cent by 2015, down from 14.5 per cent in 2011 and 36.4 per cent in 1990. The global headcount is projected to continue trending downward, reaching 9.1 per cent in 2020 and 4.9 per cent in 2030.[1] Estimates for the developing world stood at 43.5 per cent in 1990, 17.0 per cent in 2011 and 13.4 per cent in 2015, with projections of further decline to 10.5 per cent by 2020 and 5.7 per cent by 2030.

4. At the regional level, the number of people living below $1.25 a day has fallen dramatically in East Asia and the Pacific — from 957.1 million in 1990 to 86.4 million in 2015.[1] In South Asia, extreme poverty fell sharply, from 53.2 per cent in 1990 to 18.1 per cent in 2015, and is projected to reach 13.8 per cent in 2020 and 2.1 per cent in 2030. In Eastern Europe and Central Asia, the number of the extreme poor stood at 7.1 million in 1990 and 1.3 million in 2015. In Latin America and the Caribbean, the figures were 52.7 million in 1990 and 26.8 million in 2015. However, there are concerns that efforts to maintain the significant progress made in reducing poverty in Latin America and the Caribbean region seem to be hitting

[1] See http://www.worldbank.org/en/publication/global-monitoring-report/poverty-forecasts.

limits as the pace of poverty and indigence reduction and improvement in income distribution slows, especially in the wake of the 2008 global economic crisis. In the Middle East and Northern Africa region, poverty rates have begun to trend upward owing to conflict situations. While extreme poverty declined from 5.5 to 4.1 per cent in the period from 1990 and 2010, in 2012 the poverty rate increased to 7.4 per cent.[2]

5. Poverty and inequality are also rising in many high-income countries.[3] Of greater concern has been the impact of fiscal consolidation and adjustment measures on child and family poverty.[4] Child poverty increased across the European Union during the period 2008-2013. Overall, 24 per cent of the total population of the European Union is at risk of poverty or social exclusion, including 27 per cent of all children and 20.5 per cent of those over age 65 in Europe.[5]

B. Income poverty in Africa and the least developed countries

6. Poverty levels have fallen in many African countries. In 2011, an estimated 39.6 per cent of Africa's population lived on less than $1.25 a day as compared with 46.6 per cent in 1990. In sub-Saharan Africa, 40.9 per cent of the population lived on less than $1.25 a day in 2015 compared with 46.8 per cent in 2011 and 56.6 per cent in 1990. Sub-Saharan Africa's poverty rate is projected to fall to 34.2 in 2020 and 23.6 per cent in 2030. In contrast, Northern Africa has managed to halve the proportion of people living in extreme poverty — from 11.7 per cent in 1990 to 4.4 per cent in 2011. Between 1990 and 2011, levels of poverty rose in 11 African countries and declined in 36 others. Among the countries experiencing a decline, 13 have met the Millennium Development Goals target of halving the proportion of the population living on less than $1.25 a day.[6]

7. The absolute number of people living in poverty in sub-Saharan Africa has also begun to decline, bucking a long upward trend. In 1990, an estimated 287.1 million people had lived below $1.25 a day. The number increased to 416.4 million people in 2010. In 2011, the number of the extreme poor had declined slightly, to 415.4 million, and to 403.2 million in 2015. The number is projected to decline further, to 382.9 million, in 2020 and to 334.6 million in 2030.

8. In the least developed countries, the proportion of people living on less than $1.25 a day declined from 65.9 per cent in 1990 to 44.8 per cent in 2011. The 2015 Millennium Development Goal target is 32.9 per cent. Progress, however, masks strong regional and country differences. Among the seven Asian least developed countries with data, poverty declined from 64.4 per cent in 1990 to 31.9 per cent in 2011, signifying that the Millennium Development Goals target had been met. In

[2] Economic and Social Commission for Western Asia, "Arab middle class: measurement and role in driving change" (E/ESCWA/EDGD/2014/2) (Beirut, 2014).

[3] International Labour Organization, *World Social Protection Report 2014/15: Building Economic Recovery, Inclusive Development and Social Justice* (Geneva, International Labour Office, 2014).

[4] Zsolt Darvas and Olga Tschekassin, "Poor and under pressure: the social impact of Europe's fiscal consolidation", Bruegel Policy Contribution, No. 2015/04 (March 2015).

[5] See http://ec.europa.eu/social/main.jsp?catId=751.

[6] Algeria, Botswana, Djibouti, Egypt, Ghana, Guinea, Mauritania, Morocco, Namibia, South Africa, the Sudan, Swaziland and Tunisia.

Africa's least developed countries, on the other hand, the poverty rate in the period from 1990 to 2011 declined from 66.6 to 50.4 per cent, a figure falling well short of the Millennium Development Goal target of 33.3 per cent.

9. At the country level, some least developed countries have made notable progress, while others continue to face major challenges. Nine least developed countries have been able to cut the levels of poverty that existed in 1990 by more than half.[7] However, poverty rates increased in a number of least developed countries, namely, the Comoros, the Democratic Republic of the Congo, Sao Tome and Principe, Togo and Zambia.

C. Non-monetary poverty

10. Other, non-monetary dimensions of poverty also improved significantly. As a result of global efforts to attain the Millennium Development Goals, more than 2.6 billion people have gained access to an improved drinking-water source. The lives of 2.1 billion people have improved as a result of access to improved sanitation. Between 2000 and 2014, the lives of more than 320 million slum dwellers were positively impacted as they gained access to clean drinking water, improved sanitation facilities or better housing. Girls' primary school enrolment is now equal to that of boys, while antiretroviral therapy reached 13.6 million people in 2014. An estimated 6.2 million malaria deaths have been averted since 2000, while the global under-five mortality rate dropped from 90 to 43 deaths per 1,000 between 1990 and 2015.[8] These successes, among others, have positively transformed the lives of previously disadvantaged and marginalized social groups.

11. Marked progress continues to be made in the eradication of extreme hunger. The number of undernourished people fell to 794.6 million in 2014-2016 as compared with 820.7 million people in 2010-2012 and 1.01 billion people in 1990-1992.[9] In terms of prevalence, 10.9 per cent of the world's population was undernourished in 2014-2016 as compared with 11.8 per cent in 2010-2012 and 18.6 per cent in 1990. In developing regions, the prevalence of undernourishment declined from 23.3 per cent in 1990-1992 to 12.9 per cent in 2014-2016. However, overall global progress towards the attainment of food security targets by 2015 was slowed in recent years by a myriad of global challenges which include weak global economic growth, extreme weather events and conflict and political instability in some countries. Regional progress remains uneven.

12. The region of Europe and Central Asia has the lowest undernourishment levels in the world.[10] In 2015, undernourishment stood at less than 5 per cent. The region has reached the Millennium Development Goal target of reducing the incidence of hunger by half by 2015. Declining rates of hunger across the region have been

[7] Bhutan, Cambodia, Djibouti, Guinea, the Lao People's Democratic Republic, Nepal, the Sudan, Timor-Leste and Yemen.

[8] United Nations, *The Millennium Development Goals Report 2015* (New York, 2015).

[9] Food and Agriculture Organization of the United Nations, International Fund for Agricultural Development and World Food Programme, *The State of Food Insecurity in the World 2015: Meeting the 2015 International Hunger Targets — Taking Stock of Uneven Progress* (Rome, FAO, 2015).

[10] Food and Agriculture Organization of the United Nations, *Regional Overview of Food Insecurity in Europe and Central Asia: 2015: Focus on Healthy and Balanced Nutrition* (Rome, FAO, 2015).

which means that in that year, there were 61 million fewer people in employment globally than there would have been if pre-crisis employment growth trends had continued. It is projected that this number will have risen to 81 million by 2018. The gap will likely widen with significant variations across countries and between various demographic groups. For example, although women make up 40 per cent of the global labour force, nearly 73 per cent of the global jobs gap in 2014 was due to a shortfall in employment among women.

18. Job insecurity remains a great challenge. Among countries with available data, 75 per cent of workers are employed on temporary or short-term contracts, in informal jobs, under own-account arrangements or in unpaid family jobs. Growth in part-time jobs outpaced gains in full-time jobs in the majority of countries with available data between 2009 and 2013.[14] Significant gender gaps also exist, with the proportion of women engaged in part-time employment standing at 24 per cent compared with a figure of 12.4 for men.

19. Significant diversity exists in unemployment situations across regions. In the European Union, the unemployment rate was 9.6 per cent in May 2015, compared with 10.3 per cent in May 2014. This was the lowest rate recorded in the region since July 2011.[15] In the United States of America, the unemployment rate continued to decline, from 10.0 per cent in October 2009 to 5.3 per cent in June 2015.[16]

20. Employment growth has slowed down in the region of Latin America and the Caribbean. The unemployment rate stood at 6.6 per cent in 2012 and at 6.5 per cent in 2015. In East Asia, average unemployment is projected to edge slightly upward, from 4.4 per cent in 2012 to 4.8 per cent in 2015. Moreover, as China's economy has entered a new normal state, with growth expected to decelerate to 7.1 per cent in 2015 and 6.9 per cent by 2017, this may contribute to slower employment growth in the region as well as in the rest of the world. In South-East Asia and the Pacific, the unemployment rate has remained relatively low, at 4.1 per cent in 2012 and 4.3 per cent in 2015.

21. The challenge of creating decent jobs in Africa is perhaps more acute than in any other region. Despite strong economic growth rates over the past decade, Africa's total unemployment rate, at 7.6 per cent in 2014 and 7.5 per cent in 2015, has not changed. The International Labour Organization (ILO) projects that for the period 2014-2024, an estimated 12.6 million young people will enter Africa's labour market per year. The challenge is therefore not to create just any jobs, but rather to reorient strategic priorities in such a way as to enable national growth strategies to generate more high-quality, decent jobs, based on an accelerated productive transformation and the upgrading of existing jobs. Reducing the prevalence of informal or precarious jobs, with no guarantee of rights or social protection, should be the focus of policy interventions.

22. The Middle East and Northern Africa region continues to experience the highest unemployment rates of all regions. In 2013, an estimated 12.2 per cent of

[14] International Labour Organization, *World Employment Social Outlook 2015: The Changing Nature of Jobs* (Geneva, International Labour Office, 2015).

[15] Eurostat, "Euro area unemployment rate at 11.1%", news release 117/2015, 30 June 2015. Available from http://ec.europa.eu/eurostat/documents/2995521/6896063/3-30062015-AP-EN.pdf/3702d2c4-7a60-4b2c-aced-b20355f90c3a.

[16] See United States Department of Labor, Bureau of Labor Statistics, Databases, tables and calculators by subject (http://data.bls.gov/timeseries/LNS14000000).

the labour force was unemployed in Northern Africa. In the Middle East, the unemployment rate was 10.9 per cent in the same year. The region also has the highest rate worldwide of youth unemployment, with the figure standing at 29.2 per cent. These high levels of unemployment undermine regional poverty eradication efforts and equitable economic growth. Unemployment is also expected to remain elevated in Central and South-Eastern Europe and the Commonwealth of Independent States, with average unemployment projected to tick upward, from 8 per cent in 2012 to 8.2 per cent in 2015.

23. There is no single policy that can resolve the unemployment issue. Rather, a combination of initiatives dealing with improving worker skills, harnessing the demographic dividend, macroeconomic and trade policies, transition to formality, wage policy, social protection and collective bargaining are all required. The national context within which these policies are implemented also matters. Ideally, social, macroeconomic and sectoral policies should work in tandem to influence labour demand and supply and foster high-quality job-rich growth. Employment-focused growth strategies should entail increased and sustained public investments in critical infrastructure such as roads, bridges, ports and energy. When accompanied by strong institutions, these sets of policies can contribute to growth, boost aggregate demand and minimize risk at the household level. Public investments in these areas should not, however, crowd out private investments, particularly in high-productivity sectors in both urban and rural areas.

IV. Policy priorities for poverty eradication and employment creation

A. Structural transformation for employment creation and poverty reduction

24. Promoting inclusive and sustainable industrialization and enhancing economic productivity through diversification have emerged as key priorities for developing countries as they seek to reduce widespread poverty and inequality. Without such structural transformation, the sectoral distribution of gross domestic product (GDP) and labour-force patterns will remain dominated by the agricultural and other low-productivity sectors.

25. To foster growth, exports and employment creation and to reduce poverty, developing countries need to implement several concrete measures. Key among them are boosting the rate of investment, improving the productivity of existing investment, ensuring investment in strategic sectors and making macroeconomic policies consistent with the goal of structural transformation.

26. For structural transformation to contribute to sustained and inclusive employment, it has to be accompanied by the adoption of labour-intensive production processes and strengthened linkages between activities and sectors. Some of the increase in productivity associated with transformation has to be passed on to workers so as to create additional aggregate demand and hence employment. Countries also need to address constraints on employment creation such as infrastructure bottlenecks and on upgrading of workforce skills. Rural development should also be an integral part of the structural transformation agenda, especially in low-income developing countries.

27. There is also a need for deliberate government efforts to induce structural transformation through industrial policy. However, there is no consensus on how Governments should accomplish this goal. By examining different frameworks developed in the last 10 years, ILO studies have analysed how to promote the kind of structural transformation that results in rapid and sustained development processes.[17] Results show that countries that were successful in terms of structural transformation did not focus solely on one outcome, such as increasing productivity. Rather, successful Governments were able to multitask, that is to say, they (a) created jobs that people wanted by investing in activities that created learning opportunities; (b) improved technology in existing sectors while creating new avenues of employment for those displaced by that technology; (c) invested in manufacturing and industry while promoting agriculture and services; and (d) diversified within and across sectors, drawing important lessons from an examination of the forces that drove productive transformation.

28. China's rapid structural transformation and industrial upgrading, which have been in progress since 1978, have fostered employment creation in the secondary and tertiary sectors, raised rural incomes and contributed to significant poverty reduction. Before the implementation of economic reforms, per capita annual income in China stood at US $243. The figure has increased since then, to $7,593, in 2010-2014. The sectoral composition of China's economy has shifted dramatically. In 1978, agricultural exports accounted for 35 per cent of China's total exports and primary goods for 28.2 per cent of GDP. By 2009, agricultural exports accounted for less than 3.5 per cent of China's total exports, while the proportion of primary industry in the country's GDP had shrunk to 11 per cent. Manufacturing exports increased from 65 per cent of total exports to 96.5 per cent in 2009. Similarly, the share of the labour force in primary industry declined from 70.5 per cent in 1978 to 38.1 per cent in 2009, while the proportion of employment in secondary industry increased from 17.3 to 27.8 per cent over the same period.[18] The impacts of these changes were further buttressed by massive infrastructure investments and the State's proactive role in providing industrial identification and facilitating structural upgrading. However, while structural transformation resulted in a significant drop in levels of poverty, the cost to the environment has been significant, and levels of inequality have risen.

29. Among the least developed countries, important lessons can be drawn from the ongoing structural transformation of Ethiopia and its impact on poverty reduction and employment creation. The country's structural transformation process is being driven by a strong developmental State with a long-term, inclusive and unifying national vision centred on income growth and poverty reduction. The government places a premium on disciplined and evidence-based decision-making and planning. The main drivers of the country's structural transformation include its agricultural development-led industrialization strategy, which is redistributive in nature and extends support to small farmers in the form of credit and training; investment in infrastructure; a selective industrial policy which is biased towards high-potential

[17] José M. Salazar-Xirinachs, Irmgard. Nübler and Richard Kozul-Wright, *Transforming Economies: Making Industrial Policy Work for Growth, Jobs and Development* (Geneva, International Labour Office, 2014).

[18] Justin Yifu Lin and Miaojie Yu, "Industrial upgrading and poverty reduction in China", in *Structural Change and Industrial Development in the BRICS*, Wim Naudé, Adam Szirmai, Nobuya Haraguchi, eds. (Oxford, Oxford University Press, 2015). Part II, chap. 4, pp. 93-118.

sectors; investments in social protection, as illustrated by the nationwide construction of health centres, among other initiatives; and increased investment in science and technology education and innovation systems.

30. Ethiopia also aims towards transforming its economy through industrialization by attracting foreign direct investment (FDI) for channelling to economic zones where key public services will be concentrated.[19] With China set to lose 85 million manufacturing jobs in the next decade as a result of rising wages at home, a large number of Chinese manufacturers have relocated to Ethiopia and other developing countries. It is because of these efforts that Ethiopia's economy is among the 10 fastest growing in the world. More importantly, the experience of this fast growing but less resource-rich country shows the potential impact of agriculture-led growth. Levels of poverty have dropped significantly, from 62.1 per cent in 1990 to 36.8 per cent in 2011.

B. Investing in agriculture and promoting decent rural employment

31. Attaining the objectives of the Second United Nations Decade for the Eradication of Poverty also hinges on efforts to promote rural development and sustainable agriculture in particular. Efforts to fight poverty should include enhanced international cooperation in support of agricultural and rural development, including support to smallholder producers in the least developed countries. Taking stock is essential with respect to how farmers are linked to markets and how institutional and infrastructural designs have thwarted the ability of small farmers and rural landless workers to reduce the risks that they face and increase their resilience and capacity to make better decisions centred on resource management and livelihood strategies.

32. In a study of a diverse mix of 25 countries that had recently achieved reductions in national poverty rates at a pace that might enable them to reach the Millennium Development Goals target of halving poverty by 2015, it was shown that in 20 of those countries, over one half of the reductions in poverty was due to growth in agricultural incomes. One third of the reduction was attributed to growth in remittances, while the contribution of growth in non-farm incomes was just over 10 per cent.[20] In China, post-1978 agrarian reforms, which included dismantling inefficient state interventions in agricultural markets, reallocating land to farmers and granting farmers full autonomy over production, resulted in a significant rise in per capita annual net income of rural households. Rural incomes increased 20-fold, from RMB 133.6 in 1978 to RMB 3,587 in 2006.[21] Similar improvements are also under way in other developing countries. Ethiopia has been able to lift 1.4 times more people out of poverty by pursuing agriculture-led growth strategies. Similarly,

[19] See "Ethiopia becomes China's China in search for cheap labor", Bloomberg Business, 22 July 2014 (available from http://www.bloomberg.com/news/articles/2014-07-22/ethiopia-becomes-china-s-china-in-search-for-cheap-labor).

[20] Dalila Cervantes-Godoy and Joe Dewbre, "Economic importance of agriculture for poverty reduction", OECD Food, Agriculture and Fisheries Working Paper, No. 23 (Paris, Organization for Economic Cooperation and Development, 2010). doi: 10.1787/5kmmv9s20944-en.

[21] Lin and Yu, "Industrial upgrading and poverty reduction in China" (see footnote 18).

Ghana was able to reduce its national poverty rate by 1.71 per cent following gains in agricultural productivity.[22]

33. Progress in these countries underscores the importance of scaling up public and private investments in agriculture. Building agricultural capacity, high rates of investment in agricultural research and development, provision of extension services and good transportation, and developing marketing and processing infrastructure in rural areas can spur agricultural growth, and improve rural livelihoods. The political will to implement agricultural initiatives, such as the Comprehensive African Agriculture Development Programme, are therefore critical in ensuring that agriculture contributes to raising rural incomes and creating decent rural jobs.

34. Investments in agriculture should also address the major intergenerational challenges faced by the ageing agricultural sector. While developing countries tend to have youthful populations, their youth are increasingly turning their backs on agriculture, migrating from rural to urban areas and abroad, owing to lack of incentives and the perceived drudgery inherent in rural life. In order for the agricultural sector to leverage the demographic dividend and the energy, ambitions and innovative capacity of young people, efforts need to focus on creating decent jobs and improving the youth skills base. Investments in agriculture need to prioritize the improvement of the technical and vocational education systems so as to better respond to the needs of youth and rural labour markets, including through increasing youth participation in agricultural value chains.

C. Improving access to quality education and health care

35. Education and health services, through their improvement of people's capabilities and labour productivity, have been proved to lead to poverty reduction. In fact, research shows that for every US$ 1 spent on education, $10-$15 would be generated in economic growth through an increase in the value and efficiency of the labour force and hence in its productivity.[23] Education equips individuals with the required skills needed to generate income and improve their livelihoods, thereby bringing them out of poverty and helping to ensure that the benefits of growth are broadly shared.

36. Education empowers girls in particular to develop and make appropriate use of their abilities and to protect themselves from violence. Several studies have shown that educating girls and women also leads to a reduction in infant, child and maternal deaths. Women with at least some formal education are more likely than uneducated women to delay marriage, to have fewer children, to access health services and to be better informed regarding the nutritional and other needs of their family. Equitable education therefore provides a foundation for gender equality and poverty eradication.

37. The primary school net enrolment rate in the developing regions increased to 91 per cent in 2015 from 83 per cent in 2000. Sub-Saharan Africa registered the

[22] Xinshen Diao., Peter Hazell and James Thurlow, "The role of agriculture in African development", *World Development*, vol. 38, No. 10 (October 2010), pp. 1375-1383.

[23] United Nations Educational, Scientific and Cultural Organization, *EFA Global Monitoring Report 2013/4: Teaching and Learning — Achieving Quality for All* (Paris, 2014).

highest increase over the past 15 years. The literacy rate among youth aged 15-24 has increased globally from 83 to 91 per cent and the number of out-of-school children of primary school age has fallen globally by almost half.[24]

38. There are still about 100 million children who do not complete primary education and 58 million children who are out of school. Inequality in education still remains high: the poorest children are four times more likely than the richest to not go to school and five times more likely to not complete primary school.[25]

39. Globally, the good progress that has been made in achieving health-related targets, contributed to reductions in poverty. Life expectancy at birth has increased by six years for both men and women since 1990. Child death has been almost halved, from 90 deaths per 1,000 live births in 1990 to 46 deaths per 1,000 live births in 2013. The number of women who died owing to complications during pregnancy and childbirth was also almost halved during the same period. While health inequalities do still exist within and across countries, global progress has nevertheless been highly encouraging.

D. Promoting gender equality and women's empowerment

40. Poverty and inequality are inherently linked, each being a cause and consequence of the other. Gender equality and women's empowerment are critical factors in the eradication of poverty. Studies have shown the positive relation between the promotion of gender equality and the increase in GDP per capita.[26] A 1 per cent increase in the gender gap in effective labour leads to a reduction in output per worker of 0.29-0.50 per cent in sub-Saharan Africa, which translates in turn into an annual loss in effective labour exceeding US$ 60 billion.[27] On the other hand, increasing the share of a household's income controlled by women changes spending patterns, as they are more likely to invest in the well-being of children, which in turn reduces the poverty of future generations and promotes growth.[28]

41. The Millennium Development Goals target of eliminating gender disparity in primary, secondary and tertiary education has been achieved by the developing regions as a whole. Women's employment outside the agricultural sector has increased from 35 per cent in 1990 to 41 per cent in 2015 and there has been a decline in the share of women in vulnerable employment in total female employment from 59 to 46 per cent between 1991 and 2015. The global average proportion of women in parliament has nearly doubled over the past 20 years. However, although maternal mortality has also been nearly halved, large numbers of women die every day during pregnancy or from childbirth-related complications that are mostly preventable.

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[24] *The Millennium Development Goals Report 2015*.

[25] UNESCO, *EFA Global Monitoring Report 2015: Education for All 2000-2015 — Achievements and Challenges* (Paris, 2015).

[26] World Economic Forum, *Global Gender Gap Report 2014*, (Cologny Geneva, 2014).

[27] Amarakoon Bandara, "The economic cost of gender gaps in effective labor: Africa's missing growth reserve", *Feminist Economics*, vol. 21, No. 2 (2015), pp. 162-186. doi:10.1080/13545701.2014.986153.

[28] World Bank, *World Development Report 2012: Gender Equality and Development* (Washington, D.C., 2011), p. 5.

42. Gender inequalities, albeit not even across regions and countries, do persist and remain a major challenge to eradicating poverty. Women continue to face discrimination in access to work, services, assets and participation in decision-making, and they are more likely than men to live in poverty. Only half of working-age women globally participate in the labour force as compared with three quarters of working-age men. Women earned 24 per cent less than men and those with advanced education had higher rates of unemployment than men with similar levels of education for the period 2012-2013. Moreover, they make up less than 22 per cent of the number of parliamentarians worldwide. Concrete actions towards achieving equal gender representation in decision-making are therefore required.

43. There is a link between female representation in political bodies and the participation of women in the workforce, suggesting that greater participation of women in politics could positively impact labour-force participation by increasing both supply and demand of employment opportunities for women.[29]

44. Maternal and neonatal mortality as well as deteriorated health status of children affects future development opportunities. The direct cost of maternal death, as well as general health expenditures, can burden families and also push them into poverty. More generally, limited and inadequate access to health care strongly limits women's social and economic empowerment and their capacity to contribute to the development of their wider communities.

45. Women in sub-Saharan Africa continue to bear a disproportionate share of the burden of disease. For example, they constitute 58 per cent of adults living with HIV/AIDS globally.[30] The current Ebola crises, which have posed an unprecedented challenge to development and consequently to gender equality, revealed yet again the disproportionate impact that man-made or natural disasters, especially when connected to poverty, have on the lives of women compared with men. The United Nations Entity for Gender Equality and the Empowerment of Women (UN-Women) has reported that as many as 75 per cent of Ebola fatalities in Liberia and 59 per cent of those in Sierra Leone were women, given their role as caregivers and their consequent vulnerability as persons with the most direct exposure to the virus.[31] All of these health concerns pose a risk to human capital, progress and development.

46. Promoting the adoption and implementation of development strategies and policies that promote decent work and equal participation of women in productive and remunerative activities; facilitating their access to services, credit and finance; strengthening their voices and participation in decision-making, and investing in education and skills for women and girls will lead to gender equality and women's empowerment, and contribute largely to poverty eradication.

E. Expanding social protection coverage

47. Universal coverage and access to social protection are central to ending poverty, reducing inequality, fostering inclusion and enhancing human resource development and productivity. In this regard, universal social protection has

[29] *The Global Gender Gap Report 2014*, p. 43.

[30] UNAIDS, *The Gap Report* (Geneva, 2014).

[31] UN-Women, "Ebola outbreak takes its toll on women", 2 September 2014 (available from http://www.unwomen.org/en/news/stories/2014/9/ebola-outbreak-takes-its-toll-on-women).

increasingly been recognized as an integral component of national development, inclusive growth and poverty reduction efforts, particularly following the adoption by the United Nations System Chief Executives Board for Coordination of the joint crisis initiative on the Social Protection Floor, which was launched in 2009. The initiative called upon the international community to address the social and economic costs imposed by the recent global financial and economic crisis through prioritizing and institutionalizing social protection floors to shield and protect the poorest and most vulnerable people from the worst impacts of that crisis and subsequent ones.

48. Despite the well-recognized benefits of universal social protection, most people are without adequate social protection at a time when it is most needed. Some 73 per cent of the world's population lack proper social protection. Only 27 per cent of the global population have access to comprehensive social security systems, while the majority, 73 per cent, either are partially covered or do not have any coverage at all.[32] The International Labour Organization (ILO) notes that there are nearly 30 low- and middle-income countries that have universal or nearly universal social protection programmes. More importantly, more than 100 other countries are scaling up social protection and fast-tracking expansion of benefits to cover new population groups. In particular, national social protection floors have emerged as an important policy tool, one that can effectively reduce poverty and hunger, inequality and vulnerability to various shocks.

49. Some key challenges relate to the scaling up of public expenditures on social protection as well as ensuring that workers in both the formal and informal sector are adequately covered by some form of social protection. ILO estimates that, on average, Governments allocate 0.4 per cent of GDP to child and family benefits, with the figure ranging from 2.2 per cent in Western Europe to 0.2 per cent in Africa, and Asia and the Pacific. ILO estimates that only 28 per cent of the labour force worldwide are potentially eligible for contributory or non-contributory benefits under existing legislation in the event of unemployment.

50. This average masks significant regional disparities, however. In Europe, existing legislation covers 80 per cent of the labour force as compared with 38 per cent in Latin America, 21 per cent in the Middle East17 per cent in the Asia and Pacific region and 8 per cent in Africa. Coverage is particularly poorer among unemployed workers, as only 12 per cent of this group receive unemployment benefits worldwide. For this group of workers, coverage ranges from 64 per cent in Western Europe to 7 per cent in the Asia and Pacific region, 5 per cent in Latin America and the Caribbean and less than 3 per cent in the Middle East and Africa.

51. To further promote the adoption of universal social protection and ensure that no one is left behind, the World Bank Group and the International Labour Organization, on 30 June 2015, issued a joint statement on the launch of a joint mission and plan of action on universal social protection.[33] The two organizations share a vision of social protection for all and a world where anyone in need can access social protection at any time, and have made commitments to help countries design and implement universal social protection systems.

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[32] International Labour Organization, *World Social Protection Report 2014/15* (see footnote 3).

[33] See http://www.ilo.org/wcmsp5/groups/public/---dgreports/---dcomm/documents/statement/wcms_378989.pdf.

52. Today, many countries provide some form of social protection. For example, Ethiopia's productive safety programme provides direct support to chronically food-insecure households without labour. India's employment guarantee scheme employs people living in poverty to build productive infrastructure such as roads and irrigation works. Conditional cash transfer schemes in Brazil and Ecuador aim at building human capital and productivity together with tackling social exclusion and inequality. Similarly, as a result of the greater political will to extend coverage, non-contributory cash transfers cover 80 per cent and 70 per cent of children in Argentina and Brazil, respectively. In fact, almost all Latin American countries have some sort of conditional cash transfer programme. Those programmes have gradually become important mechanisms within social policies and regional poverty reduction strategies. Their immediate objective is to reduce extreme poverty, while in the long run breaking the intergenerational transmission of poverty. To this end, they include conditionalities related to certain nutrition-, education- and health-related objectives.

53. However, despite marked progress, important challenges still remain. For instance, social protection is neither universal nor rights-based in the Arab region. Three quarters of people do not receive any assistance. Furthermore, the provision of social protection has declined in most Arab countries, including high- and low-income ones, owing to financial constraints.[34] In Latin America, while the positive impacts on welfare of conditional cash transfers are widely recognized, the direct impact on poverty is often low because of the small amounts of money received by recipients. As regards longer-term outcomes, increases in primary school enrolment rates and reductions in malnutrition have been observed. The effects on secondary school attendance, however, seem to be less significant.

54. To boost the impact of their social protection schemes, it is important for countries to go beyond addressing extreme poverty. For instance, social protection should reach children who are not yet covered, and in this regard should include children and families who are not living in extreme poverty but are still vulnerable. Hence, countries should move from anti-poverty programmes to the universalization of the social protection rights for all children and families. Greater importance should also be placed on the removal of social exclusion factors, including through ensuring greater integration among different pillars of cash transfers for children (contributory, non-contributory or child tax credits); greater integration with other programmes that aim at tackling the social risks faced by families with children; and reducing segmentation in respect of the quality of the supply of basic services between targeted and non-targeted populations. Greater attention should also be paid to "graduation rules:, i.e., they should be compatible with the aim of improving families' capabilities with respect to escaping and remaining out of poverty by their own means.

F. Climate change mitigation and adaptation

55. Climate change, as manifested by more frequent and intense droughts and environmental disasters, is making it more difficult for affected communities and individuals to escape poverty. In India's Andhra Pradesh, a study found that 14 per

[34] ESCWA, "Social justice in the policies of Arab States" (E/ESCWA/28/8), discussion paper, 5 May 2014.

cent of households were able to escape poverty, while 12 per cent became impoverished. Among those who fell back into poverty, extreme weather events were cited as a cause.[35] To cope with environmental shocks, households are often forced to sell critical productive assets such as livestock, which are frequently used to pay for children's education and health-care needs.

56. To mitigate, and help communities adapt to, climate change, greater efforts are required in the areas of investment in clean technologies, reduction of the use of carbon fuels, investment in smart agriculture and expansion of social protection coverage.

G. Combating inequality and social exclusion

57. An increasing body of rigorous evidence shows that highly unequal societies have shorter and less robust periods of economic growth. More unequal countries are also more susceptible to financial crises. Further, inequality reduces the impact of economic growth on poverty reduction. Hence, in the context of the post-2015 development agenda, rising or persistently high levels of inequality constitute significant obstacles to the attainment of all sustainable development goals.

58. Therefore, tackling inequality within and across countries should be a top priority. Reducing inequality also reduces poverty and promotes the social inclusion and dignity of disadvantaged and marginalized social groups, and contributes to economic growth. It reduces social tensions and fosters political stability as well.

59. However, inequality has increased or remains high in most countries. In about two thirds of countries with available data, income inequality rose between 1990 and 2005.[36] From the mid-1980s to the late 2000s, income inequality rose in 17 out of the 22 Organization for Economic Cooperation and Development (OECD) member countries. This trend is being exacerbated by the rising incidence of insecure forms of employment, growing unemployment and inactivity. Consequently, the income gap between permanent and non-permanent workers has increased over the past decade. Income inequalities have also grown in most emerging market countries, with the exception of several Latin American countries where income distribution has improved since 2002.

60. Income inequality impacts disadvantaged social groups most severely, and this is often manifested in other dimensions of inequality persistently suffered by these groups. For example, global averages have a tendency to mask differences at regional, national and subnational levels, with the poorest and most disadvantaged children suffering from the worst outcomes in a range of areas.[37] Data available for 1990 and projected to 2015 show that children from the poorest quintile are twice as likely to die before their fifth birthday as children from the richest households. Across regions, children from the poorest households are far less likely to achieve

[35] See World Bank, "Climate change complicates efforts to end poverty", feature story, 6 February 2015 (available from http://www.worldbank.org/en/news/feature/2015/02/06/climate-change-complicates-efforts-end-poverty).

[36] Francisco H. G. Ferreira and Martin Ravallion, "Global poverty and inequality: a review of the evidence", World Bank Policy Research Working Paper; No. 4623 (May 2008).

[37] UNICEF, *Progress for Children Report: Beyond Averages — Learning from the MDGs*. No. 11/2015 (New York, June 2015).

minimum learning standards than those from the richest, while rural children are twice as likely as urban children to be stunted.

61. Targeted tax and redistribution policies have proved effective in reducing inequality, especially when they provide incentives to improve human capital through education and health. Latin America's recent experience is a case in point. In Brazil, as in several Latin American countries, social protection programmes targeting investments in education and health services, cash transfers and labour-market reforms have played a major role in reducing income inequalities.

62. Well-structured policies designed to reduce income gaps do not necessarily reduce incentives to invest in fixed capital, innovation and skills acquisition. On the contrary, in the context of globalization and open economies, the reduction of inequality that can be achieved is more likely to accelerate growth and employment creation than the effects of the past trend towards less progressive taxation and lower social transfers.

63. Prudent management of fiscal policy helps redistribute economic gains and mobilizes and reorients funding for investments in human resource development, social protection and infrastructure, and leverages public policy so as to generate jobs that not only target the poor but have the potential to reach all segments of society. Better access to quality education and health services, housing and clean water, land, financing and judicial recourse means that poor and excluded people can become better equipped to contribute to economic growth, care for their children and benefit from a legitimate chance to achieve upward social mobility.

V. Implementation of the inter-agency system-wide plan of action for poverty eradication

64. The implementation of the policies discussed above requires concerted efforts at national and international levels. The inter-agency system-wide plan of action for poverty eradication has served to coordinate the efforts of the United Nations system in its advisory and programmatic support to Member States.

65. In this regard, the Department of Economic and Social Affairs of the United Nations Secretariat continues to facilitate global policy dialogue and consensus-building on post-2015 development priorities through its normative and analytical work. In particular, the Department's analytical reports promote greater awareness regarding the decent work agenda as an effective development strategy for poverty eradication and inclusive development. The Department is also engaged in providing support for capacity-building in countries in areas that include statistical development and strengthening of the role of cooperatives for achieving inclusive development.

66. There has been a growing shift in the thinking of multilateral agencies regarding the centrality of employment as a sustainable route out of poverty. Countries in all regions, at all levels of development, have been increasingly committing to productive employment by regularly announcing and adopting employment targets. Over the years, a number of global templates such as the Global Jobs Pact were agreed so as to help ILO tripartite constituents articulate national policies and programmes for stronger employment outcomes. At the country level, ILO provides labour-market situation analysis, policy advice on

incorporating employment goals in overarching policy frameworks, analysis and research on how to increase the employment content of growth with a view to informing policy design, monitoring and evaluation, capacity-building for government and social partners, and facilitation of tripartite policy dialogue. So far, 63 countries have requested the help of ILO in formulating their national employment strategies.

67. In 2014, the United Nations System Chief Executives Board for Coordination identified decent jobs for youth as a top priority. An inter-agency task team has been established to develop a global initiative for decent jobs for youth, whose aim will be to foster system-wide cooperation, strengthen policy coherence and coordination, mobilize and engage external partners, and enhance linkages between normative and operational aspects of United Nations efforts in the service of improved programming and delivery.

68. To address child poverty in all its dimensions, UNICEF works continuously to identify children living in poverty and help devise effective interventions to protect children and families living in poverty. Recently developed innovative tools and approaches hold out the promise of achieving better results for children, including the multidimensional child poverty studies supported by UNICEF, child-responsive budgeting and child-focused poverty and social impact analyses.

69. The Food and Agriculture Organization of the United Nations (FAO) has prioritized support for decent rural employment in its reviewed strategic framework. Under its "Reduce rural poverty" work programme to, FAO aims at promoting greater opportunities to access decent farm and non-farm employment. A large-scale "Jobs for the poor" umbrella programme has been developed to mobilize the resources needed for action at a scale commensurate with the magnitude of the challenge. In 2014-2015, employment-related work of FAO included support provided for the formulation and implementation of policies, strategies and programmes that generate decent rural employment, especially for rural youth and women. Effective support has been provided to more than 20 countries. Multi-country programmes on youth employment were also launched in East and West Africa, while a third programme is geared towards supporting the Rural Futures Programme under the New Partnership for Africa's Development (NEPAD) Planning and Coordinating Agency. In the Caribbean, FAO is increasing youth participation in the food and feed systems. In the area of policy advice, capacity development and technical support, FAO is involved in extending the application of international labour standards to rural areas. The main areas of focus have been prevention of child labour in agriculture, and occupational safety and health in the different agricultural subsectors.

70. Among the regional commissions, ESCWA continues to work with regional partners to assist in the development of inclusive social policies and to improve responses to youth issues and priorities, including employment generation, which is at the core of the development challenges faced by the region. ESCWA is also advocating for the implementation of a universal rights-based and integrated approach to social policy directed towards achieving social justice.

71. The Economic Commission for Africa has developed the African Social Development Index in response to requests from member States for an Africa-specific indicator of social exclusion. The tool aims at assessing the depth of human exclusion in six key dimensions of well-being, namely, employment, productivity,

survival, health, education and decent life. The tool has been piloted in five countries and its roll-out is under way in the rest of the region

VI. Conclusion and recommendations

72. The experience of countries that have achieved impressive success in reducing poverty indicates that economic growth, while necessary, needs to be complemented by mutually supportive social and environmental policies, critical investments in the social sector, agriculture and infrastructure, and a supportive international environment.

73. In light of the above, the General Assembly may wish to consider the following recommendations:

(a) **To eradicate poverty, developing countries should prioritize economic structural transformation that leads to industrialization, the creation of more jobs in more productive sectors, improvements in income and reductions in precarious forms of employment. The State should actualize the vision and strategy by creating an enabling environment for the growth of the private sector as the engine of growth;**

(b) **Countries should strengthen policy coherence and integration among the three pillars of sustainable development in order to ensure that social, economic and environmental policies become more effective in reducing poverty and inequality. In particular, social and macroeconomic policies should work hand in hand to enable people living in poverty and vulnerable groups to actively participate in and significantly benefit from growth;**

(c) **Countries should ensure that poverty eradication policies are: well-coordinated and involve all levels of government and relevant actors, including people living in poverty; are efficient and effective and mainstreamed into all relevant public policies, including economic, budgetary, health, education and training policies; and are gender-mainstreamed;**

(d) **Countries should make greater efforts to promote inclusive, equitable and sustainable employment-intensive growth, which entails investing in health, education, skills training and social protection and ensuring that the post-2015 development framework is people-centred; and universal social protection should be prioritized;**

(e) **Countries should ensure that social inclusion policies promote the active participation of all segments of society in the labour market, particularly women, youth, persons with disabilities, older persons and indigenous groups. Active inclusion should encompass access to quality education and health care, water and energy, and adequate material, social and cultural resources;**

(f) **To strengthen food and nutrition security and facilitate economic growth, regional integration, job creation and social inclusion, countries should, in partnership with the private sector, boost investments in agriculture and infrastructure development in both rural and urban areas.**

I. The state of disaster risk

1. Twenty-five years after the proclamation of the International Decade for Natural Disaster Reduction, and 10 years since the Hyogo Framework for Action 2005-2015: Building the Resilience of Nations and Communities to Disasters was endorsed by the General Assembly, global disaster risk continues to accumulate faster than it is being reduced. Economic losses have reached an average of $250 billion to $300 billion a year, severely affecting stable economic growth in low- and middle-income countries and eroding development gains in vulnerable communities.

2. Despite significant progress in spreading a culture of disaster risk reduction around the world over the past decade of implementing the Hyogo Framework for Action, the international community is running to a standstill as economic losses grow and mortality remains stubbornly high in many parts of the world. The *Global Assessment Report on Disaster Risk Reduction 2015: Making Development Sustainable — The Future of Disaster Risk Management*, which was launched in March 2015 in New York, highlights the pressing need to address the underlying factors that amplify the impact of natural hazards and technological and biological disasters. Drivers of risk that contribute most to the increase in global risk levels are poverty and inequality, climate change and variability, unplanned and rapid urbanization, lack of responsible land management, and such compounding factors as demographic change, unsustainable use of natural resources, and declining ecosystems. The global multi-hazard risk assessment using a probabilistic modelling technique developed by the United Nations Office for Disaster Risk Reduction and its partners has estimated the annual risk only from earthquakes, floods, tropical cyclones and tsunamis at $360 billion.

3. The deadliest single disaster triggered by a natural hazard during the reporting period resulted from two earthquakes in the Kathmandu Valley, Nepal, that occurred on 25 April and 12 May 2015. The scale of the impact indicates that more could have been done to address the underlying risk factors. Thanks to actors that include the Nepal Risk Reduction Consortium and the National Society for Earthquake Technology-Nepal, some work has been done in recent years on retrofitting a small number of schools and health facilities, but as in many hazard-exposed countries the challenge remains one of bringing that work to scale. Recovery needs, at $6.6 billion, represent more than 25 per cent of the country's gross domestic product (GDP). Early estimates suggest that 1 million people have fallen into poverty as a result of those disasters, at a time when Nepal was expected to meet some of the Millennium Development Goals. That disaster typifies the challenge that low-income countries face, particularly from intensive disaster events.

4. The Ebola outbreak in West Africa is a major public health emergency of international concern and the largest and most complex Ebola outbreak on record. The widespread and intense transmission has had grave health, social and economic consequences. This reflects the need outlined in the Sendai Framework for disaster risk reduction to be integrated into national health systems and for developing the capacity of health workers to understand disaster risk. Ebola and other pandemics highlight the need to strengthen country-level capacity in disaster risk management for health, the implementation of the International Health Regulations and the building of resilient health systems.

5. The plight of small island developing States was brought home at the opening on 14 March 2015 of the Third United Nations World Conference on Disaster Risk Reduction, held in Sendai, Japan, when the President of Vanuatu briefed participants on the impact that very day of category 5 cyclone Pam, which brought death and destruction to his scattered island home. By all accounts, the National Disaster Management Office of Vanuatu and the Vanuatu Red Cross performed well in communicating early warnings and saving lives, but the cyclone left much of the population without housing and vulnerable to vector-borne disease as the rainy season started. The Asian Development Bank reports that the Vanuatu economy grew by 3.6 per cent in 2014, but that figure will likely contract in 2015, following cyclone Pam. There has been extensive damage to the power grid, and up to 96 per cent of crops were destroyed. Approximately 14,000 homes were destroyed or damaged. It is a reality that threatens many small island developing States concerned about rising sea levels, extreme weather events and other features of climate change, which are raising levels of exposure and vulnerability in many parts of the world.

6. Frequent and small-scale disasters were a feature of the past year. Urban and rural areas alike, particularly in low- and middle-income countries, experience regular small disasters that undermine development. The extensive risk of large numbers of recurrent, small-scale disasters associated mainly with flash floods, landslides, urban flooding, storms, fires and other localized events is not captured by global risk modelling; nor are the losses reported internationally. When extensive risk manifests as real damage and loss, it is usually absorbed by low-income households, communities and small businesses. Over the past decade, the equivalent of $94 billion in reported losses was associated with extensive risk in the 85 countries and territories for which data are available, according to the *Global Assessment Report*, representing an ongoing erosion of development assets, such as houses, schools, health facilities, roads and other local infrastructure.

7. Through improved research methodology, it will be possible to provide a clearer understanding of how exposure and vulnerability to risk are changing across the globe and the impact of changing risk levels on development. Good-quality data on hazards, demography and the vulnerability of physical assets are crucial. Work is continuing on the development of national disaster loss databases, which numbered 82 by mid-2015.

II. Third United Nations World Conference on Disaster Risk Reduction

8. The Third United Nations World Conference on Disaster Risk Reduction, which was held in Sendai from 14 to 18 March 2015, was the first in a series of United Nations conferences scheduled in 2015 and 2016 to determine the post-2015 development agenda. The outcome of the World Conference, the Sendai Framework for Disaster Risk Reduction 2015-2030, is designed to complement and reinforce other expected outcomes from the Third International Conference on Financing for Development, the United Nations summit for the adoption of the post-2015 development agenda, the twenty-first session of the Conference of the Parties to the United Nations Framework Convention on Climate Change and the United Nations Conference on Housing and Sustainable Urban Development (Habitat III).

9. Several donors supported the process of ensuring full engagement in the development of the Sendai Framework by the major groups and other civil society participants, including persons living with disabilities, the private sector, intergovernmental organizations and the United Nations system. The generous support of Switzerland, which hosted the preparatory process, and Japan, which hosted the World Conference, is worth highlighting in that regard.

10. More than 6,500 delegates attended the World Conference, including 25 Heads of State and Government and Vice-Presidents and well over 100 ministers. The intergovernmental segment included substantive contributions by all stakeholders across the five ministerial round tables and three high-level multi-stakeholder partnership dialogues, in which representatives of the major groups and other stakeholders were present. In addition, 34 multi-stakeholder sessions were held, focusing on progress made under the Hyogo Framework for Action, emerging risks, and commitments made to the implementation of the Sendai Framework. Outside the formal confines of the World Conference, more than 700 local and international side events were held as part of the public forum, attended by more than 50,000 people.

11. The level of inclusiveness for persons with disabilities at the World Conference set a new standard, and it was considered to have been the most barrier-free United Nations meeting to date. The venue was accessible, as was the work of the Conference, through the provision of sign language interpretation, Braille documentation and closed captioning. The Conference also delivered on the United Nations commitment to be "paper-smart", with only a fraction of printing compared with other international conferences.

III. Sendai Framework for Disaster Risk Reduction 2015-2030

12. The Sendai Framework for Disaster Risk Reduction 2015-2030 was adopted as the successor to the Hyogo Framework for Action by the World Conference on 18 March and endorsed by the General Assembly in its resolution 69/283 on 3 June 2015.

13. The Sendai Framework is the outcome of consultations involving all stakeholders between March 2012 and July 2014 and of intergovernmental negotiations from July 2014 until the closing of the World Conference. This included the deliberations at the fourth session of the Global Platform for Disaster Risk Reduction in 2013 and regional platforms for disaster risk reduction and their ministerial segments throughout 2014.

14. The Sendai Framework maps out a broad, people-centred approach to disaster risk reduction and applies to the risk of small- and large-scale disasters caused by natural or man-made hazards, as well as related environmental, technological and biological hazards and risks. It aims to guide the multi-hazard management of disaster risk in development at all levels and within and across sectors. Strong political leadership and commitment are required to achieve the outcome.

15. The Sendai Framework advocates a shift in focus from managing disasters to managing risk, and the implementation of sustainable development, economic growth and environmental and climate change-related policies that prevent the creation of new risk, reduce existing risk and strengthen resilience. Consequently,

the Sendai Framework can be used to interpret other instruments to ensure that, in their implementation, risk is taken into account and managed.

16. The expected outcome places emphasis on the reduction of disaster risk in addition to the reduction of losses, and in that context losses may be considered as indicators of development that is not risk-informed and thus not sustainable. The seven global targets introduce the possibility of measuring progress vis-à-vis the expected outcome, and the related monitoring offers feedback on how to further strengthen relevant policies and implementation mechanisms across sectors. The seven targets are interdependent and mutually reinforcing.

17. The seven global targets in the Sendai Framework are:

(a) Substantially reduce global disaster mortality by 2030, aiming to lower the average per 100,000 global mortality rate in the decade 2020-2030 compared to the period 2005-2015;

(b) Substantially reduce the number of affected people globally by 2030, aiming to lower the average global figure per 100,000 in the decade 2020-2030 compared to the period 2005-2015;

(c) Reduce direct disaster economic loss in relation to global GDP by 2030;

(d) Substantially reduce disaster damage to critical infrastructure and disruption of basic services, among them health and educational facilities, including through developing their resilience by 2030;

(e) Substantially increase the number of countries with national and local disaster risk reduction strategies by 2020;

(f) Substantially enhance international cooperation to developing countries through adequate and sustainable support to complement their national actions for implementation of the Framework by 2030;

(g) Substantially increase the availability of and access to multi-hazard early warning systems and disaster risk information and assessments to people by 2030.

18. The articulation of the four priorities for action according to local and national, as well as regional and global, levels will assist in focusing efforts and strengthening cooperation. The Sendai Framework also defines the shared responsibility of stakeholders and the important role that they can and need to play in disaster risk reduction, in particular their expected contributions to the implementation of the priorities for action.

19. The Sendai Framework focuses on: the need for improved understanding of disaster risk in all its dimensions of exposure, vulnerability and hazard characteristics; the strengthening of disaster risk governance, including national platforms for disaster risk reduction; accountability in disaster risk management; the need to prepare to "build back better"; a strong call for the strengthened use of science and technology in policymaking; the mobilization of risk-sensitive investment to avoid the creation of new risk; the resilience of critical infrastructure, including health infrastructure, and of cultural heritage and workplaces; and the role of local authorities and communities.

20. The Sendai Framework calls for the strengthening of international cooperation and global partnership and risk-informed donor policies and programmes, including

financial support and loans from international financial institutions, and recognizes the Global Platform for Disaster Risk Reduction and the regional platforms, as well as national platforms, as mechanisms for coherence across agendas, monitoring and periodic reviews of implementation, including of targets.

21. The guiding principles are important for the implementation of the four priorities for action. Six of the principles are particularly important and define the primary responsibility of States to prevent and reduce disaster risk, including through cooperation; shared responsibility between central and local authorities, sectors and stakeholders; protection of persons and their assets, while promoting and protecting all human rights, including the right to development; all-of-society engagement; engagement of all State institutions of an executive and legislative nature at the national and local levels; and coherence of policies, plans, practices and mechanisms across different sectors and agendas.

Implementing the Sendai Framework for Disaster Risk Reduction 2015-2030

22. The implementation of the Sendai Framework will build on the ongoing efforts of States already initiated under the Hyogo Framework for Action. A smooth transition from the Hyogo Framework to the Sendai Framework is required to ensure that ongoing initiatives are not disrupted, while progressively integrating the new elements agreed upon in Sendai. I am happy to note that this is already happening with remarkable rapidity in all regions. Within months of the adoption by the World Conference of the Sendai Framework, major gatherings have already taken place in the Americas, Asia and Africa to work on plans of action to implement the Sendai Framework. A meeting will be held in Europe to discuss implementation later in the year. Several countries have taken the initiative to have the Sendai Framework translated into national languages.

23. At the national level, States will need to identify focal points for the implementation of the Sendai Framework. In doing so, States may want to consider ensuring that the cross-cutting nature of disaster risk reduction is taken into account and that focal points are empowered to represent all sectors.

24. The agreed target of a substantial increase in the number of countries with national and local disaster risk reduction strategies by 2020 may warrant the need to give special attention over the coming years to assessing disaster risk, defining baselines for risk trends and developing strategies accordingly. With that in mind, a number of States have already initiated stocktaking exercises and cross-institutional discussions on what may be needed to implement the Sendai Framework.

25. The implementation of the Sendai Framework requires a better understanding of risk. The Framework calls for the enhanced development and dissemination of science-based methodologies and tools to record and share disaster losses and relevant disaggregated data and statistics, as well as to strengthen disaster risk modelling, assessment, mapping and monitoring and multi-hazard early warning systems to underpin risk-informed decision-making.

26. The Hyogo Framework for Action Monitor will be updated to reflect the Sendai Framework. The indicators to be used to measure progress in achieving the global targets will be developed by the open-ended intergovernmental working group on indicators and terminology established by the General Assembly in June 2015. The monitoring of the Sendai Framework will start in 2017, once baselines

have been agreed upon. Global communication and practical guidance are being prepared to assist States and stakeholders in implementing the Sendai Framework.

27. More than 460 voluntary commitments were made before and during the World Conference. The World Conference adopted a resolution in which it welcomed the stakeholders' expression of voluntary commitments to reduce disaster risk and invited further expressions of voluntary commitments and the creation of partnerships to implement the Sendai Framework. A comprehensive analysis, the establishment of an online registry and the development of a reporting mechanism are being undertaken to support stakeholders in the implementation of their commitments.

IV. International cooperation and partnership

28. In the Sendai Framework, Heads of State and Government recognized the importance of international cooperation and global partnership in supporting developing and especially vulnerable and exposed countries, through the enhanced provision of means of implementation, in managing disaster risk.

29. International cooperation has been fundamental to the preparations for the World Conference and its outcome. That support includes such mechanisms as the Global Platform for Disaster Risk Reduction and the regional platforms and tools, including the Hyogo Framework for Action Monitor and the voluntary peer reviews among countries.

30. The next session of the Global Platform for Disaster Risk Reduction will be held in 2017 and will be an important opportunity to take stock of the initial steps in implementing the Sendai Framework, including the conduct of risk assessments and definition of baselines, as well as the implementation of the voluntary commitments of stakeholders. The preparatory process of the Global Platform will build on the deliberations of the regional platforms to be held in 2016.

31. The World Conference invited the General Assembly to consider including the review of global progress in the implementation of the Sendai Framework as part of its follow-up processes to United Nations conferences and summits, aligned with the Economic and Social Council, the high-level political forum on sustainable development and the quadrennial comprehensive policy review cycles, as appropriate. As discussions continue on the strengthening of the Council and on the working methods of the high-level political forum, Member States may want to ensure that the deliberations of the Global Platform for Disaster Risk Reduction and regional platforms and their review of progress on the Sendai Framework inform the agendas of the relevant United Nations governance bodies and mechanisms.

32. Treaty bodies are well placed to support the mainstreaming of disaster risk management. In that context, the Committee on the Elimination of Discrimination against Women is engaged in the development of draft general recommendation on the gender-related dimensions and empowerment of women in disaster risk reduction and climate change. The ongoing work of the International Law Commission on the protection of persons in the event of disasters is also of importance.

33. Increasingly, disaster risk reduction features in relevant international frameworks related to sustainable development, climate and the environment. An

example is the SIDS Accelerated Modalities of Action Pathway, which considers disaster risk in the context of small island developing States, as does the follow-up to the Programme of Action for the Least Developed Countries for the Decade 2011-2020. Moreover, recent developments in multilateral environmental agreements present opportunities to engage the environment sector and its expertise in supporting the implementation of the Sendai Framework, notably the Convention on Biological Diversity and the Convention on Wetlands of International Importance especially as Waterfowl Habitat, whose parties recently adopted resolutions that promote ecosystem-based approaches to disaster risk reduction and enhancing linkages with national biodiversity action plans and sustainable wetlands management, respectively. Disaster risk reduction features in the sustainable development goals and targets under negotiation, and it is critical that specific and concrete references remain in the final outcome to ensure coherence in the implementation of the Sendai Framework and the post-2015 development agenda.

34. Ensuring coherence and mutual reinforcement of disaster risk reduction in other post-2015 international agreements and processes will also be necessary. This can be done in several ways, such as by recognizing the Sendai Framework and its outcomes in future international agreements, promoting and prioritizing programmes and partnerships that yield multiple benefits across agreements, and aligning targets, indicators and monitoring and reporting requirements.

35. I welcome the establishment by the General Assembly of an open-ended intergovernmental expert working group, supported by the United Nations Office for Disaster Risk Reduction, with the involvement of stakeholders, for the development of a set of indicators to measure progress against the seven global targets in the Sendai Framework and to update the report entitled "2009 UNISDR Terminology on Disaster Risk Reduction". The working group's expected outcome has the potential to contribute to a coherent approach in implementing international frameworks.

36. Building on the most recent quadrennial comprehensive policy review, the United Nations system will continue to strengthen linkages between its normative and operational work as it relates to disaster risk reduction. This is particularly relevant as the United Nations system supports the nationally led efforts of developing countries to better integrate disaster risk reduction and to implement the Sendai Framework. The next cycle of the quadrennial comprehensive policy review will enable States to consider how to further adapt United Nations operational activities for development to ensure that greater emphasis is placed on managing disaster risks in the context of sustainable development.

37. At the World Conference, the United Nations System Chief Executives Board for Coordination committed to integrating disaster risk reduction in programmes and operations of the system. The system's commitment to prioritizing disaster risk reduction at the strategic and operational levels was reaffirmed, as was its readiness to support States in the implementation of the Sendai Framework. The United Nations system now measures how effectively disaster and climate risk are addressed within United Nations Development Assistance Frameworks, with resident coordinators accountable for coordination on disaster risk reduction within United Nations country teams. Currently, 79 per cent of the Frameworks include disaster risk reduction.

38. Following the endorsement of the United Nations Plan of Action on Disaster Risk Reduction for Resilience by the Chief Executives Board in April 2013, the system has committed to reviewing the Plan of Action in the light of the Sendai Framework, to develop minimum standards for implementation and to build coherence within the Plan of Action and support the sustainable development goals and other relevant instruments. The revised Plan of Action is expected to be presented to the Chief Executives Board for endorsement in 2016. In advance of the review, a progress report on the outcomes of the United Nations system's work on disaster risk reduction since the adoption of the Plan of Action will be submitted to the High-level Committee on Programmes.

39. Mainstreaming climate and disaster risk is an increasingly important priority for the international financial institutions. The World Bank has committed to screening all International Development Association projects for climate and disaster risk; incorporating climate and disaster risk considerations into all new country partnership frameworks; and introducing a co-benefits tracking system for disaster risk management funding. In financial year 2014, 80 per cent of country partnership frameworks were risk-informed, 44 per cent of World Bank projects considered climate and disaster risk, and disaster risk management and climate change adaptation co-benefits reached $5.9 billion.

V. Regional cooperation for disaster risk reduction

40. Regional intergovernmental organizations will play a critical role in the transition from the Hyogo Framework for Action to the Sendai Framework. Over the past decade, regional intergovernmental organizations have been instrumental in advancing disaster risk reduction at the national level through the development of strategies and mechanisms. The opportunity now exists to review them to ensure that they foster more efficient planning, enhance the development and dissemination of science-based methodologies and tools, create common information systems, develop and disseminate instruments, such as standards, codes and operational guides, exchange good practices and support programmes for cooperation and capacity development in line with the Sendai Framework. Regional platforms provide a space for States to lead that work and to leverage existing partnerships and establish new ones in support of the Sendai Framework's implementation.

Africa

41. In Africa, there are now 32 national platforms for disaster risk reduction; 32 countries have reported on progress in implementing the priorities under the Hyogo Framework for Action; 73 cities and towns are participating in the Making Cities Resilient campaign; and 15 countries have functional national disaster loss databases, while 5 more are under development. The outcome statement of the Fifth Africa Regional Platform for Disaster Risk Reduction, held in Abuja in 2014, was endorsed by the African Union Executive Council at its twenty-sixth ordinary session, held in January 2015, and reflected in the outcomes of the third session of the African Ministerial Conference on Meteorology, held on 13 and 14 February 2015 in Praia, and the fifteenth session of the African Ministerial Conference on the Environment, held from 4 to 6 March 2015 in Cairo. In the statement, it was recognized that most disasters in Africa were water-related and that efforts were needed to prevent conflict as part of overall efforts to build resilience to disasters.

The impact of climate change on urban areas was recognized, as was the need for disaster-sensitive physical planning, enforcement of building codes and investments in resilient urban infrastructure, which can be applied to prevent the accumulation of further risks.

42. Stakeholder leadership was demonstrated at various levels in Africa. Parliamentarians took the lead in forming a caucus on disaster risk reduction in Kenya. African youth delegates actively led the development of a post-2015 framework for disaster risk reduction and participated in an innovative initiative with the non-governmental organization Peace Boat that enhanced awareness of urban resilience and risk-sensitive tourism. The International Day for Disaster Reduction in 2014 was celebrated in several countries with the active participation of older persons, culminating in a three-day global event in South Africa on the contribution of older persons in the prevention, mitigation and reduction of disasters.

43. As a follow-up to the Third United Nations World Conference on Disaster Risk Reduction, the seventh meeting of the Africa Working Group on Disaster Risk Reduction, which included a high-level segment, was held from 21 to 23 July 2015. It was led by the African Union Commission, with support from the United Nations, and hosted by the Government of Cameroon and the secretariat of the Economic Community for Central African States. The meeting reviewed the Extended Programme of Action for the Implementation of the Africa Regional Strategy for Disaster Risk Reduction in the light of the Sendai Framework. A series of subregional platforms are also planned.

Arab States

44. In the Arab States, there are 17 national platforms for disaster risk reduction; 15 countries have reported on progress in implementing the priorities under the Hyogo Framework for Action; 293 cities and towns are participating in the Making Cities Resilient campaign; and 10 countries have functional national disaster loss databases that take into account issues specific to the region, such as water scarcity, drought and climate change. The League of Arab States has regularly provided the legislative support and guidance needed to advance the disaster risk management agenda in the Arab region.

45. Collaboration with the League of Arab States and the Government of Egypt led to the holding of the Second Arab Conference on Disaster Risk Reduction in Sharm el-Sheikh, Egypt, in September 2014. The Conference resulted in the adoption of the Sharm el-Sheikh Declaration on Disaster Risk Reduction, which was endorsed by the Council of Arab Ministers Responsible for the Environment. Region-specific voluntary commitments were made by the Arab participants at the Conference. The Declaration calls for a strong focus on addressing water and food security, the effects of climate change and extreme weather events, and the establishment of an Arab science and technology network.

46. A regional preparatory meeting will be held in September 2015 in coordination with the League of Arab States to integrate the new elements of the Sendai Framework into the Arab Strategy for Disaster Risk Reduction 2020. A ministerial-level meeting is planned for the first half of 2016, to ensure that Arab implementation of the Sendai Framework benefits from strong political support.

Asia and the Pacific

47. In Asia and the Pacific, there are 17 national platforms for disaster risk reduction; 40 countries have reported on progress in implementing the priorities under the Hyogo Framework for Action; 651 cities and towns are participating in the Making Cities Resilient campaign; and 26 countries have functional national disaster loss databases. An Asian Partnership on Disaster Reduction meeting of 17 countries was held in Bangkok in June 2015 to discuss the regional implementation of the Sendai Framework. Governments and stakeholders agreed to develop a regional road map and policy guidance for Sendai Framework implementation, to work on country reports on the current status of disaster risk reduction and to prepare development sector briefing materials and support the engagement of development policymakers and practitioners.

48. The next Asian Ministerial Conference on Disaster Risk Reduction, which will be hosted by India in New Delhi from 14 to 18 November 2016, will seek to strengthen the Conference as a regional platform. A ministerial-level meeting is due in November 2015 to discuss a road map for Asia to implement the Sendai Framework, which will be presented at the Conference in 2016. The focus will be on strengthening the role of intergovernmental organizations and developing implementation plans at the national and local levels.

49. The Strategy for Climate and Disaster-Resilient Development in the Pacific was adopted at the 2014 Pacific Platform for Disaster Risk Management, held from 2 to 4 June. It was presented at the third International Conference on Small Island Developing States, held in Samoa from 1 to 4 September 2014, and in which disaster risk reduction featured prominently. Expected to be endorsed by Pacific leaders in September 2015, the Strategy will closely link implementation and reporting in support of the Sendai Framework in the Pacific. The next Pacific regional disaster risk reduction meeting will be held in October 2015 in Suva. Meanwhile, businesses and small locally owned hotels are working to improve their resilience through the introduction of business continuity planning.

50. Governments in the Central Asia and South Caucasus region convened a regional ministerial meeting on disaster risk reduction in Bishkek in January 2015 and committed to developing, assessing and monitoring regional and national programmes. A ministerial forum will be held in April 2016 to assess disaster risk reduction baselines and consider a regional plan of action to implement the Sendai Framework.

Europe

51. There are 27 national platforms for disaster risk reduction in Europe, and 26 countries have submitted Hyogo Framework for Action monitoring reports at least once. A total of 601 cities and towns are participating in the Making Cities Resilient campaign. At present, four countries have functional national disaster loss databases. The European Council adopted five separate conclusions on the communication of the Sendai Framework concerning risk management capability, disability-inclusive disaster management, the role of the private sector in development, and the sustainable development goals. All conclusions demonstrate a shift from a response-centred to a prevention-centred approach. The European Parliament, through its disaster risk reduction network, stimulated discussions on disaster resilience within the context of sustainable development. The European

Union is formally proposing the adoption of the loss and damage indicators and methodology developed by the United Nations Office for Disaster Risk Reduction, guaranteeing compatibility with non-European Union countries that maintain national disaster loss databases.

52. Building on the positive peer review process initiated by the European Forum for Disaster Risk Reduction and financially supported by the European Commission, the European Commission has developed a peer review programme conducting national peer reviews on topics related to disaster risk management in Bulgaria, Estonia, Georgia, Malta, Poland and Turkey in 2015 and 2016. The European and Mediterranean Major Hazards Agreement of the Council of Europe, in collaboration with the Regional Office for Europe of the United Nations Office for Disaster Risk Reduction, launched guidelines on the inclusion of persons with disabilities in disaster risk management within the Sendai Framework.

53. Following the adoption of the Sendai Framework, Europe is developing a road map for its implementation to be adopted at the sixth annual meeting of the European Forum for Disaster Risk Reduction, which will be held from 7 to 9 October 2015 in Paris and will include a ministerial session. Regional organizations are moving forward in planning the implementation of the Sendai Framework. The Council of Europe will organize a ministerial session focusing on developing a four-year programme on disaster risk management based on the Sendai Framework, while the European Commission will have developed an action plan by 2016.

54. The fifth annual meeting of the European Forum for Disaster Risk Reduction, held from 6 to 8 October 2014 in Madrid, agreed to conduct biennial open forum meetings hosted by the European Commission to increase knowledge-sharing on advances in disaster risk reduction; and to develop a road map on common areas of engagement in addressing the implementation of the Sendai Framework. It agreed on the nomination of Finland and Turkey as the future chair and co-chair, respectively, following the chairmanship of France in 2015; and on an outcome document highlighting the essential role of local awareness action, climate change adaptation, risk governance, flood loss reduction, the rights of persons with disabilities, and increased sharing of knowledge, experiences and good practices.

Americas

55. In the Americas, there are 23 national platforms for disaster risk reduction; 32 countries have reported on progress in implementing the priorities under the Hyogo Framework for Action; 822 cities and towns are participating in the Making Cities Resilient campaign; and 27 countries have functional national disaster loss databases. Building on regional and national efforts towards the implementation of the Hyogo Framework for Action in the Americas, the fifth meeting of the Regional Platform for Disaster Risk Reduction in the Americas, to be held in 2016, will bring together representatives to consider the implications of the Sendai Framework, including the alignment of national disaster risk reduction policies, strategies and plans. Regional intergovernmental organizations across the Americas are expected to take similar action.

56. The third Consultative Forum of the Central American Policy for Integrated Risk Management, held on 18 and 19 June 2015 in El Salvador, stressed the

importance of integrating climate change adaptation and disaster risk reduction as part of implementing the Sendai Framework.

57. The region established a Latin American network of ministries of finance for disaster risk reduction, with support from the United Nations, to promote the wider integration of disaster risk-informed investment practices in public investment planning and expenditure. Through the network, countries offer peer-to-peer assistance in developing capacities within the ministries of economy and finance in Central America and the Caribbean to incorporate disaster risk considerations into national public investment systems.

VI. Global initiatives, stakeholder engagement and partnerships

Global risk modelling and knowledge

58. The United Nations and its partners supported 30 countries in ensuring that multi-hazard disaster and climate risk assessments inform development planning. Support was given to the establishment of pilot risk reduction management centres in the Dominican Republic, Guyana, Jamaica, Trinidad and Tobago and the British Virgin Islands, with technical support from Cuba in an example of South-South cooperation. In Asia and the Pacific, capacities to assess climate risk implications for key economic sectors were strengthened. The Global Education and Training Institute for Disaster Risk Reduction in the Republic of Korea has trained 2,082 government officials from 74 countries on integrating disaster risk reduction and climate change into development policy.

Making Cities Resilient: "My city is getting ready"

59. To date, the Making Cities Resilient: "My city is getting ready" campaign has 2,550 participating cities. The campaign tools, namely the Local Hyogo Framework for Action Monitor, the "10 essentials" and the disaster resilience scorecard, have provided municipalities with the means to better understand and manage disaster risk. The total population of all cities and local governments committed to the campaign's 10 essentials for building local resilience now stands at 700 million. There are now 54 role model cities. The city-to-city learning model has also been increasing in popularity as a mechanism for city officials to share their technical experiences and lessons.

Parliamentarian initiative

60. Currently, 1,850 parliamentarians from 163 countries are engaged in the parliamentarian initiative of the United Nations Office for Disaster Risk Reduction. More than 30 legislators from Africa, Asia, Europe and Latin America are disaster risk reduction champions, advocating the mainstreaming of disaster risk reduction in the legislative and oversight work of parliaments. In 2014, the 130th Inter-Parliamentary Union Assembly adopted a resolution in which it called upon parliamentarians to integrate disaster risk reduction into national planning and budgeting processes.

61. At the Third United Nations World Conference on Disaster Risk Reduction, parliamentarians committed to taking action to obtain support for the Sendai Framework, strengthen legislative frameworks and conduct regular reviews and

updates of legislation. Parliamentarians also pledged their support to the initiative of the International Law Commission to propose a draft treaty concerning disaster risk reduction, making it a duty of States to reduce disaster risk and elevating the right of people to be free from the effects of disasters to the level of international customary law.

Worldwide Initiative for Safe Schools

62. The Worldwide Initiative for Safe Schools, a government-led global partnership for advancing safe school implementation at the national level, was presented and endorsed at the World Conference. The endorsement followed a first meeting of Safe School Leaders hosted by Turkey in October 2014, during which the Istanbul road map was initiated. The Initiative aims to support countries in implementing safe learning facilities, school disaster management and the incorporation of disaster risk reduction and resilience in education. The second meeting of Safe School Leaders is scheduled to be hosted by the Islamic Republic of Iran on 4 and 5 October 2015. The Global Alliance for Disaster Risk Reduction and Resilience in the Education Sector, consisting of the United Nations Office for Disaster Risk Reduction, the United Nations Children's Fund, the United Nations Educational, Scientific and Cultural Organization, the Global Facility for Disaster Reduction and Recovery, Save the Children, Plan International, World Vision and the International Federation of Red Cross and Red Crescent Societies, supports that work.

Safe hospitals initiative

63. At the World Conference, the World Health Organization launched the Comprehensive Safe Hospital Framework, built on the achievements of 79 countries that have assessed the safety of more than 4,000 health facilities and implemented concrete actions to make hospitals safe and operational in times of emergency. That Framework, combined with the launch of the second edition of the Hospital Safety Index, is expected to play a vital role in enabling countries to reach the Sendai Framework target on reducing damage to critical infrastructure and disruption of basic services.

United for Disaster Resilience Initiative

64. The United for Disaster Resilience Initiative supports the inclusion of the private sector in the Sendai Framework and articulates the role of the insurance industry as risk managers, risk carriers and institutional investors, in line with the five private sector visions for a resilient future developed by the Disaster Risk Reduction Private Sector Partnership of the United Nations Office for Disaster Risk Reduction. The Insurance Industry Commitments Initiative provides a platform for insurers to exercise leadership through concrete actions spanning risk management, insurance products, investment, partnerships and disclosure frameworks that support disaster risk reduction, climate change adaptation and mitigation, financial inclusion, sustainable investment, and accountability and transparency.

Early warning and preparedness

65. The need for an international initiative to further strengthen and spread the use of multi-hazard, end-to-end, early warning systems as an integral part of efforts by

countries to reduce their exposure to disasters and adapt to climate change has been identified in the Sendai Framework target to "substantially increase the availability of and access to multi-hazard early warning systems and disaster risk information and assessments to people by 2030". This reinforces the demand for the Global Framework for Climate Services. Concerned States and partners are developing international initiatives to be launched at the twenty-first session of the Conference of the Parties to the United Nations Framework Convention on Climate Change, in Paris in December 2015, through the Lima-Paris Action Agenda, which my Office is undertaking with the Peruvian and French presidencies of the Conference of the Parties and the secretariat of the United Nations Framework Convention on Climate Change. The 10-year anniversary of the Indian Ocean tsunami, a disaster that killed more than 200,000 people and devastated coastal communities across Asia and parts of Africa, was marked throughout the world on 24 December 2014. While significant progress has been made in early warning, public awareness and education, subsequent tsunamis in Japan and Pacific States highlight the need for continuing improvement.

International Day for Disaster Reduction

66. As part of the five-year "Step up" campaign, the 2014 International Day for Disaster Reduction focused on the role of older persons in building disaster resilience. With the slogan "Resilience is for life!", the International Day brought attention to older persons as active agents of resilience; the campaign generated 4.5 million tweets on Twitter. With HelpAge International, two surveys were conducted on ageing and disaster risk reduction. The survey results concluded that older persons had capabilities to prepare themselves for disasters and needed to be more integrated into disaster risk reduction community plans. The 2015 International Day will highlight the use of traditional, indigenous and local knowledge in disaster risk reduction and will complete the "Step up" campaign, which previously focused on children, women and girls, people living with disabilities and older persons.

United Nations Sasakawa Award for Disaster Risk Reduction

67. The Sendai Framework calls for the development of effective instruments for public awareness and education, noting among others the Sasakawa Award for Disaster Risk Reduction. The Award gives recognition to best practices and innovative thinking on disaster risk reduction. The 2015 laureate was selected for "enduring and influential individual efforts", including three decades of teaching and research with an imprint on disaster risk reduction policy.

Disaster risk-informed investments

68. Since the launch of the "R!SE" initiative at United Nations Headquarters in 2014, 10 businesses, Governments, non-governmental organizations and science networks have joined the effort as active partners or expressed their support. In a number of events across the Americas, Asia and Europe, exchanges have been initiated between cities and Governments, businesses and investors, international agencies and disaster risk management experts and concrete activities started at the local, national and global levels. The initiative builds on the work of the Disaster Risk Reduction Private Sector Partnership in joining together business,

Government, academia and civil society in order to make private and public investments risk-sensitive.

69. Efforts to integrate disaster risks into the financial system and economic decision-making continued. Bringing together a coalition of accounting organizations, insurance industry entities, financial regulators, credit rating agencies and science leaders, the aim of the initiative is to optimize disaster risk reduction by reinforcing financial resilience, maintaining economic stability and promoting appropriate regulation. Presented at the United Nations Climate Summit in 2014 and the World Conference, the initiative has resulted in commitments, including on the part of the insurance industry, to integrating disaster and climate risk considerations into all asset classes and to doubling disaster and climate-sensitive investments to $84 billion by the twenty-first session of the Conference of the Parties and increasing them tenfold, to $420 billion, by 2020.

Post-disaster needs assessments

70. Under the tripartite partnership of the European Union, the World Bank and the United Nations, the post-disaster needs assessment methodology and the Guide to Developing Disaster Recovery Frameworks were launched at the World Conference. During the reporting period, post-disaster needs assessments with detailed sector- and area-based recovery plans with costs, implementation strategies and time frame have been completed for the volcanic eruption in Cabo Verde, the floods in Malawi and Mozambique, the earthquake in Nepal and the tropical cyclone in Vanuatu and, for the Ebola outbreak in West Africa, in Guinea, Liberia and Sierra Leone. The results inform extensive government and multilateral recovery programmes.

Scientific and Technical Advisory Group

71. At the World Conference, a scientific and technical partnership for the implementation of the Sendai Framework was launched, building on the Scientific and Technical Advisory Group and including experts and scientists from all regions. The partnership will be open to major governmental or non-governmental scientific and technical institutes or organizations, the United Nations, research centres, networks and platforms that will respond to a call to commit to the implementation of the Sendai Framework. The first science and technology cooperation partnership conference will be held early in 2016.

VII. Funding of the United Nations Office for Disaster Risk Reduction

72. For the biennium 2014-2015, the United Nations Office for Disaster Risk Reduction set a resource target of $70 million to fulfil its work, with a possibility of an increase to up to $80 million. In November 2014, the Office issued a funding update reflecting global requirements for the biennium 2014-2015 of $80 million, which included the organization of regional platforms for disaster risk reduction and, chiefly, of the World Conference, including its preparatory process.

73. In the past 10 years, voluntary contributions to the Office more than quadrupled, and the number of donors grew from 19 to 28. Against a backdrop of

global economic crisis and shrinking aid budgets, that increase is indicative of the importance of the work of the Office.

74. In order to secure more predictability, stability and timeliness in funding, 11 multi-year agreements were signed during the biennium 2014-2015. Work has also continued to secure increases in unearmarked funding, where possible on a multi-year basis.

75. Following the adoption of the Sendai Framework and the need to kick-start its implementation, efforts to raise the required funds in voluntary contributions continue. Already, in 2014, the General Assembly, in its resolution 69/219, recognized the growing demands on the Office and its need for increased, timely, stable and predictable resources and requested the Secretary-General to recommend options to enable the Office to effectively coordinate the implementation of the Sendai Framework.

76. Relying on extrabudgetary resources for the coordination of the implementation of the Sendai Framework may not be sufficient, however, given that challenges remain in raising predictable, stable and timely funds solely through voluntary contributions. The regular budget of the United Nations provides for one position at the D-1 level. In order to strengthen the capacity of the Office in a stable and predictable manner, there would thus be a need for Member States to consider increasing resources for the Office in the assessed regular programme budget.

VIII. Conclusions and recommendations

77. The Third United Nations World Conference on Disaster Risk Reduction and its preparatory process and outcome, the Sendai Framework for Disaster Risk Reduction 2015-2030, represent a turning point with regard to how disasters and their causes need to be addressed in future.

78. The Sendai Framework opens a new phase, and its key messages are: (a) the shift of the primary focus from managing disasters to managing risk; (b) the need to develop and implement sectoral policies and instruments, including on investments, at the local, national, regional and global levels, which in themselves prevent the creation of new risk, reduce existing risk and strengthen resilience; and (c) the need for new collaborative models across public and private stakeholders and in international cooperation.

79. Disaster risk reduction will not happen simply through the implementation of the Sendai Framework, but rather through the implementation of all instruments related to sustainable development, growth, environment, climate change and relief interpreted through the approach put forward by the Sendai Framework and with all stakeholders taking their share of the responsibility. While disaster risk reduction is the primary responsibility of the State and all its institutions, it requires an all-of-society engagement and a clear articulation of responsibilities across all stakeholders. Accountability for risk creation in itself, besides for disasters, is the agreed upon call of the Sendai Framework, and the ongoing work of the International Law Commission on the protection of persons in the event of disasters is a critical contribution in that direction.

80. By the end of 2015, there will be a new set of international policy instruments concerning disaster risk reduction, financing for development, sustainable

development and climate change. Coherence in implementation will be required and will constitute a major challenge that will demand goodwill and cooperation across all stakeholders, both public and private. The ongoing work to develop indicators with which to measure progress in the implementation of future instruments is an opportunity to foster such coherence.

81. The existing mechanisms for cooperation in disaster risk reduction, such as the Global Platform for Disaster Risk Reduction and the regional and national platforms, will be essential in supporting the coherent development and implementation of policies and practices across sectors and in monitoring disaster risk trends. Their integrated functioning and deliberations will be a critical source of information on which the United Nations governance bodies' deliberations and policy guidance can be based.

82. The United Nations Plan of Action on Disaster Risk Reduction for Resilience will be revised to reflect the expectations on the United Nations system to support States and other stakeholders in the implementation of the Sendai Framework, and the United Nations Office for Disaster Risk Reduction will be strengthened to meet those expectations.

83. In the light of the above, it is recommended that:

(a) Over the next three years, States carry out stocktaking on disaster risk management practices and give priority to the assessment of disaster risk and the development of baselines to assess disaster risk trends;

(b) States give priority to the development of national and local disaster risk reduction policies, strategies and plans over the next five years with the participation of all stakeholders;

(c) States give due consideration to the establishment or strengthening of national mechanisms for disaster risk reduction, such as national platforms for disaster risk reduction, in the light of the characteristics indicated in the Sendai Framework;

(d) States actively participate in the open-ended intergovernmental expert working group on indicators and terminology on disaster risk reduction;

(e) States consider disaster risk indicators in the relevant systems to measure progress on the post-2015 sustainable development agenda and goals, climate change and other relevant instruments;

(f) States take into account the periodic progress reviews of the Sendai Framework in the context of the integrated and coordinated follow-up processes to the United Nations conferences and summits and in the relevant deliberations of the Economic and Social Council, including the quadrennial comprehensive policy review cycles and the high-level political forum on sustainable development;

(g) States enhance international cooperation and the provision of means of implementation to support developing countries in the implementation of the Sendai Framework, in particular the assessment of disaster risk and the development of baselines to assess disaster risk trends, and in that context make bilateral and multilateral development assistance programmes risk-informed;

(h) States consider augmenting their financial contributions to the Trust Fund for the International Strategy for Disaster Reduction and increasing the assessed regular programme budget to ensure timely, stable and predictable support for the implementation of the Sendai Framework.

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Sustainable development

Implementation of Agenda 21, the Programme for the Further Implementation of Agenda 21 and the outcomes of the World Summit on Sustainable Development and of the United Nations Conference on Sustainable Development

Report of the Secretary-General

Summary

The present report has been prepared pursuant to General Assembly resolution 69/214. It provides an update on the follow-up to the 2012 United Nations Conference on Sustainable Development and new developments, taking into account the outcome document of the Third International Conference on Financing for Development, held in Addis Ababa from 13 to 16 July 2015, and the range of commitments contained therein, and the outcome of the United Nations summit for the adoption of the post-2015 development agenda, to be held from 25 to 27 September 2015 in New York.

This report also highlights the main outcome of the third meeting of the high-level political forum on sustainable development, which was convened under the auspices of the Economic and Social Council, and whose theme was "Strengthening integration, implementation and review: the high-level political forum on sustainable development after 2015". The discussions at the high-level political forum provided important insights regarding its role. Among other developments since the United Nations Conference on Sustainable Development, has been the monitoring by the Secretariat of the implementation of partnerships and the voluntary commitments made at that Conference. The Secretary-General has also proposed an approach to follow-up on partnerships for small island developing states. The report provides recommendations for the consideration of Member States with respect to the 2030 agenda for sustainable development.

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I. Introduction

1. On 25 September 2015, the United Nations summit for the adoption of the post-2015 development agenda will adopt the declaration entitled "Transforming our world: the 2030 agenda for sustainable development" containing the agreed sustainable development goals. On 16 July 2015, the Third International Conference on Financing for Development adopted the Addis Ababa Action Agenda of the Conference, which is an integral part of the 2030 agenda. The action agenda was subsequently endorsed by the General Assembly in its resolution 69/313 of 27 July 2015, as contained in the annex thereto. This constitutes a pivotal moment in the follow-up to the United Nations Conference on Sustainable Development and General Assembly resolution 69/214: the conclusion of a long preparatory process rooted in the Rio conferences and the beginning of a new era, that of the implementation of the 2030 agenda. In the months that follow, the consequences and implications of this new agenda for existing mandates must be articulated, particularly those explicitly addressing sustainable development, so as to enable the building of synergies and to ensure that existing and new mandates are mutually reinforcing.

2. The present report should be read in conjunction with other reports submitted to the General Assembly on sustainable development.

II. Follow-up to the United Nations Conference on Sustainable Development

3. The outcome document of the United Nations Conference on Sustainable Development, entitled "The future we want",[1] established several intergovernmental processes which contributed to the formulation of the 2030 agenda, in particular the Open Working Group on Sustainable Development Goals (see A/68/970) and the Intergovernmental Committee of Experts on Sustainable Development Financing (see A/69/315), which also contributed extensively to the Third International Conference on Financing for Development. In addition, the summary and recommendations developed by the President of the General Assembly based on the four one-day structured dialogues held during the sixty-eighth session of the Assembly on possible arrangements for a facilitation mechanism to promote the development, transfer and dissemination of clean and environmentally sound technologies have paved the way for the decisions taken on this mechanism in Addis Ababa.

4. The sustainable development goals are integrated and indivisible, global in nature and universally applicable, taking into account different national realities, capacities and levels of development and respecting national policies and priorities. Targets are defined as aspirational and global, with each Government setting its own national targets guided by the global level of ambition but taking into account national circumstances. Each Government is called upon to decide how these aspirational and global targets should be incorporated in national planning processes, policies and strategies. The sustainable development goals build on the

[1] General Assembly resolution 66/288, annex.

foundation laid by the Millennium Development Goals, seek to complete the unfinished business of the Goals and respond to new challenges.

A. High-level political forum on sustainable development

5. In the 2030 agenda, the high-level political forum on sustainable development is called upon to assume a central role in overseeing a network of follow-up and review processes at the global level, working coherently with the General Assembly, the Economic and Social Council and other relevant organs and forums, in accordance with existing mandates. The agenda underscores that effective linkages need to be established with the follow-up and review arrangements of all relevant United Nations conferences and processes, including on the least development countries, the small island developing States and the landlocked developing countries.

6. The creation of the high-level political forum on sustainable development was at the heart of the reform of the institutional framework for sustainable development decided at the United Nations Conference on Sustainable Development. It held its third meeting from 26 June to 8 July 2015 under the auspices of the Economic and Social Council, including a three-day ministerial segment.

7. The theme of the forum was "Strengthening integration, implementation and review: the high-level political forum on sustainable development after 2015".

8. Because the high-level political forum met when the negotiations on both the post-2015 development agenda and the outcome of the Third International Conference on Financing for Development were held, its ministerial declaration, as adopted by the Economic and Social Council, was procedural in nature so that the results of the ongoing negotiations would not be prejudged. In the declaration, the President of the Council was requested, on an exceptional basis and without setting a precedent, to issue summaries of the discussions held at the high-level segment and the high-level political forum as a contribution to the Third International Conference on Financing for Development and the intergovernmental negotiations on the post-2015 development agenda.

9. The 2015 meeting of the high-level political forum offered the opportunity to take stock and deepen understanding of some aspects of the new agenda. It provided an opportunity to discuss how to implement the agenda and mobilize various actors in that endeavour.

10. Participants discussed in more detail how the follow-up and review of the agenda should be ensured; how the high-level political forum could play a role in this process and more generally carry out its functions; and how the United Nations system could contribute to that effort.

11. During the discussions, Member States expressed their determination to equip the high-level political forum to serve as the core high-level United Nations platform for promoting and reviewing the implementation of sustainable development and the sustainable development goals. They also viewed the forum as a platform through which to instil coherence and implement new ways of working, including in the United Nations system. The forum has the potential to forge a new role for the United Nations as a platform for the development of Member States-driven international governance — a governance that integrates economic, social

and environmental dimensions of sustainable development and looks towards the long term and future generations while maintaining the focus on poverty eradication.

12. The main messages from the forum can be summarized as follows:

Implementation

- There is a need to learn from the lessons of the Millennium Development Goals experience — from both its successes and its shortcomings.
- National ownership will be critical as a universal and inclusive agenda is implemented, one that seeks to address inequalities between and within countries and "leave no one behind".
- There needs to be transparency and accountability, which is an area where the high-level political forum can play an important role. Accountability should be understood in a broad sense, to include, for example, the accountability of the private sector in the context of the need for a transformative shift.
- A strengthened global partnership is needed, which could include a global framework designed to provide technology transfer and transfer of knowledge, based on North-South cooperation, with South-South cooperation as a complement.
- For successful implementation of the agenda, it is crucial to ensure coordination at all levels — national, regional and global — and build new partnerships among multiple stakeholders.
- The high-level political forum can provide policy guidance to help forge links among the different elements of the agenda. It could, for example, request the regional commissions, governing bodies and other intergovernmental platforms of United Nations entities — and the entire system — to undertake a review of their approaches and working methods so as to enable them to better support the implementation of the agenda.
- The high-level political forum should be "solution-oriented". In this regard, meetings of the high-level political forum should allow sufficient time for sharing experiences and best practices, and addressing issues where implementation of the goals is off track, including the means of implementation.
- The high-level political forum should stimulate and facilitate collaboration for implementation. For this purpose, it should have a clear view of the readiness and capacity of all countries to implement the sustainable development goals. By assessing the status of availability of financing, technology and capacity-building for implementation in all countries — through country reviews, for example — the forum could help to direct support where it is most needed.
- The high-level political forum should spur major groups and other stakeholders of civil society to mobilize around the implementation of the agenda. Communicating the content of the agenda in a simple and compelling way will be important for the taking on of ownership by people.

Integration

- Twenty-three years after the holding of the United Nations Conference on Environment and Development ("Earth Summit") (Rio de Janeiro, Brazil, 3-14 June 1992), it is well recognized that economic, social and environmental dimensions of sustainable development must be taken into account. The sustainable development goals and targets are integrated and indivisible, global in nature and universally applicable. Synergies are important, as are trade-offs.

- Integration can be understood from three perspectives: horizontal integration, encompassing how to ensure that different ministries and organizations will work together; vertical integration, encompassing how to ensure that there is coherence across different levels and that local, subnational and State authorities work together; and stakeholder integration, encompassing how to ensure that the various actors work together.

- There are high hopes that policy guidance derived from the high-level political forum will help link the different elements of the agenda. The forum should advance an integrated approach to the sustainable development agenda, one that addresses poverty eradication in a holistic manner and maximizes coherence among the various relevant sectors and priority action areas.

- The high-level political forum will have a clear-cut role to play in modernizing the way in which the United Nations responds to the development-related needs of the world. The forum needs to be the venue where integration of the work of specialized and other platforms and institutions takes place. It could provide guidance to coordination structures within the United Nations system such as the Environment Management Group, UN-Water and UN-Energy.

- Integrated planning is central to ensuring the implementation of a transformative 2030 agenda for sustainable development, inter alia, for the support of post-conflict and disaster-stricken areas. The United Nations system, including the regional commissions, can help countries integrate national strategies by providing technical assistance and support for the formation of these strategies.

- Integration of the three dimensions of sustainable development requires knowledge and skills, to be acquired through formal and non-formal education. I.e., science can help bring down silos.

- Integration can be supported through the development of multipurpose indicators which relate to more than one of the targets (e.g., water, food security and health).

Follow-up and review

- An effective follow-up and review framework is necessary to the success of the new agenda. The high-level political forum will play a central role in reviewing progress.

- The review framework should aim to create a culture of openness grounded in evidence and sound methodologies.

- While guidance on the reviews should not be overly prescriptive, it should be clear about what is expected. Among the principles to be put forward are the following: reviews should be voluntary and comprehensive, addressing progress on all sustainable development goals and means of implementation; they should support countries in making informed policy choices; they should be rigorous and evidence-based through use of reliable disaggregated data; they should be open to and inclusive of all stakeholders, building on existing platforms, bodies and forums; and developing countries should be given support through capacity-building in this respect. The process should be State-led. At the same time, it should integrate the voices of those on the front lines: citizens, civil society and other stakeholders.

- Follow-up should be carried out at multiple levels, extending from the local all the way to the global level, but the starting point and principal level will be the country level.

- It will be important to ensure that the social dimension plays a key role in the follow-up and review process. Topics of particular interest in national reviews should include those related to technology innovation and facilitation, capacity development and financing mechanisms for the sustainable development goals.

- Inclusive national reviews will inform regional and global reviews. Coherence should be ensured across the different levels.

- It will be important to achieve an adequate balance between comparability of national reviews, and flexibility and recognition of national ownership of, and sovereignty over, the reviews.

- Reviews at the regional level can serve as a platform for exchange of experiences and best practices and discussion of regional trends and cross-border and transboundary regional issues, and support regional cooperation and coherence in response to common challenges.

- Several models for peer review exist which could be drawn upon if Member States decide to follow that path. They include the universal peer reviews in the area of human rights, the African Peer Review Mechanism, reviews in the context of the Pacific Islands Forum and reviews by the International Organization of la Francophonie. Different regions can organize their own review processes utilizing existing regional and subregional organizations and processes and taking into account regional contexts.

- At the global level, the high-level political forum is mandated to conduct country reviews and will need to define how it will proceed and build on national and regional reviews.

- Thematic reviews will also be conducted. The high-level political forum should draw from thematic reviews conducted in other forums and examine issues in an integrated manner. Thematic platforms will be important for monitoring and follow-up in respect of the sustainable development goals. They will need to adapt to the 2030 agenda for sustainable development and the goals. The forum should provide space for the inclusion of these platforms so as to enable them to showcase best practices and lessons learned as well as provide a basis for the forum's thematic reviews of the goals, bearing in mind

the interlinkages and synergies between the goals and targets, as well as relevant cross-cutting issues.

- The follow-up and review process should be streamlined to ensure that there is no excessive overlap and that the reporting process does not overburden countries or cause reporting fatigue, especially for developing countries. Duplication should be minimized.
- The importance of data was underlined. Disaggregated data will be crucial especially for ensuring that no one is left behind. Use of not only quantitative but also qualitative data would also be highly important.
- Ensuring that national statistical offices are ready to hit the ground running is essential. Resources will need to be mobilized for data collection and capacity development of statistical agencies, especially in developing countries.

Expectations with regard to the high-level political forum on sustainable development

- The high-level political forum on sustainable development will be where the international community looks at the "big picture". It will provide political leadership, guidance and recommendations and track implementation of the sustainable development goals. It can ensure accountability and coherence within the United Nations system.
- The high-level political forum should offer a means for responding to new and emerging challenges, promoting the science-policy interface, addressing sustainable consumption and production, and considering the particular challenges of countries in special situations. It should be forward-looking, assess the long-term impact of policies and trends, and focus on building resilience.
- The decisions taken at forum meetings should resonate with all people, including women, children and youth, and disadvantaged groups.
- The forum should link together the work of all relevant processes, commissions, panels and other bodies that do not communicate with each other sufficiently. In this way, the forum could serve as an "early warning system" for international action, with the ministerial declaration providing concrete recommendations for actions.
- The forum will also be critical in helping to integrate all of the intergovernmental follow-up processes emerging from the United Nations Conference on Sustainable Development, including the third International Conference on Small Island Developing States, with the follow-up of the 2030 agenda for sustainable development and the outcome of the Third World Conference on Disaster Risk Reduction, held in Sendai, Japan, in March 2015.
- The forum should be flexible enough to remain relevant for the entire period of the implementation of the sustainable development goals. Its agenda should maintain a balance between predictability and flexibility.
- Meetings of the forum at the level of the sessions of the General Assembly should focus on review of overall progress at the strategic level, and devote

time to consideration of new and pressing issues which need to be addressed by the international community.

- Ensuring the participation of major groups and other stakeholders in the forum, as mandated by the General Assembly in its resolution 67/290, will be crucial.

- Parliaments and local authorities need to be involved in the work of the forum. Parliamentary networks around the world that deal with a variety issues can be utilized as useful platforms for monitoring.

13. In the 2030 agenda for sustainable development, to be considered by the General Assembly at the United Nations summit for the adoption of the post-2015 development agenda (September 2015), the Secretary General, in consultation with Member States, is requested to prepare a report, for consideration at the seventieth session of the Assembly in preparation for the 2016 meeting of the high-level political forum on sustainable development, that outlines critical milestones towards coherent, efficient and inclusive follow-up and review at the global level. That report should include a proposal on the organizational arrangements for State-led reviews at the forum under the auspices of the Economic and Social Council, including recommendations on voluntary common reporting guidelines, and should clarify institutional responsibilities and provide guidance on annual themes, on a sequence of thematic reviews and on options for periodic reviews for the forum.

B. Options for facilitating the development, transfer and dissemination of clean and environmentally sound technologies

14. In 2012, the United Nations Conference on Sustainable Development called for identification of options for a technology facilitation mechanism.[2] This process included eight workshops and structured dialogues convened by the President of the General Assembly in 2013 and 2014, based on whose recommendations the Secretary-General, in his synthesis report on the post-2015 sustainable development agenda, entitled "The road to dignity by 2030: ending poverty, transforming all lives and protecting the planet" (A/69/700) proposed to establish an online global platform building on and complementing existing initiatives, with the participation of all relevant stakeholders" (para. 125).

15. As a follow-up to the Secretary-General's proposal, the Inter-Agency Working Group on a Technology Facilitation Mechanism was initiated by the Department of Economic and Social Affairs of the United Nations Secretariat and the United Nations Environment Programme (UNEP) at the end of 2014.

16. The Working Group's work focused on the following work streams: (a) mapping of existing technology facilitation initiatives, including support for policy formulation and strengthening of technological capabilities and innovation systems; (b) identifying areas of synergy and areas of possible cooperation within the United Nations system on technology-related work; (c) developing options for a possible online knowledge hub and information-sharing platform; and (d) cooperating with relevant stakeholders on science, technology and innovation (STI) capacity-building.

[2] General Assembly resolution 66/288, annex, para. 273.

17. In this regard, the Third International Conference on Financing for Development, in paragraph 123 of its Addis Ababa Action Agenda, decided to establish a Technology Facilitation Mechanism, to be launched at the United Nations summit for the adoption of the post-2015 development agenda in order to support the sustainable development goals. The mechanism comprises (a) a multi-stakeholder forum on science, technology and innovation for the sustainable development goals to be convened by the President of the Economic and Social Council; (b) an online platform to serve as a gateway for information on existing science, technology and innovation initiatives, mechanisms and programmes; and (c) a United Nations inter-agency task team on science, technology and innovation for the sustainable development goals, which will promote coordination, coherence and cooperation within the United Nations system on science, technology and innovation-related related matters, enhancing synergy and efficiency, in particular to enhance capacity-building initiatives. The task team will also engage stakeholders from civil society, the private sector and the scientific community.

18. In the Addis Ababa Action Agenda, the Conference also decided that the meetings of the high-level political forum on sustainable development would be informed by the summary of the multi-stakeholder forum. The themes for the coming multi-stakeholder forum on science, technology and innovation for the sustainable development goals will be considered by the high-level political forum on sustainable development forum, taking into account expert inputs from the United Nations task team.

C. Strengthening the science-policy interface

19. One of the functions of the high-level political forum, as defined in the outcome document of the United Nations Conference on Sustainable Development, and underscored by the 2030 agenda, is to strengthen the science-policy interface, inter alia, through a global sustainable development report building on existing assessments, and enhance evidence-based decision-making at all levels (see General Assembly resolution 66/288, annex, para. 85 (k) and (l)).

20. The 2014 and 2015 meetings of the forum considered issues related to science, including emerging issues. In 2015, Member States emphasized that the forum could help ensure that topics related to the post-2015 agenda are in the research agendas of scientists around the world. It should provide a platform for science-policy dialogue, highlight trends, discuss policy-relevant analysis and translate outcomes of science-policy debates into action, thereby contributing to agenda-setting. The interface function would involve communication among policymakers, science communities and civil society. Not only "Western science" but also traditional knowledge and various perspectives are important for this dialogue.

21. Member States also expect the forum to identify and discuss emerging issues. Many emerging issues and grand challenges were identified in the discussion. The science behind emerging issues needs to be made available to policymakers more systematically. The Global Sustainable Development Report should deliver to the forum a concise analysis of emerging issues and global challenges.

22. In preparation for the forum in 2015, the Secretariat produced the 2015 edition of the Global Sustainable Development Report,[3] with a view to facilitating discussion on the science-policy interface.

23. Extensive inputs were sought for this report from the United Nations system, scientists, government officials and stakeholders. More than 500 independent scientists and experts from many United Nations entities and affiliated organizations located in all regions contributed to the report. A crowdsourcing exercise was carried out in the six official languages of the United Nations and some 187 science briefs were submitted. Following a public review, a number of those briefs were incorporated in the report.

24. The Report endeavours to present a range of scientific perspectives and to be policy-relevant but not policy-prescriptive. It offers concrete suggestions on how to strengthen the science-policy interface at the forum. The Report examines the sustainable development goals as constituting an interlinked system, analysing how the goals are interrelated through their targets, and how progress towards one goal may depend on and contribute to progress towards others. Such an integrated assessment of the sustainable development goals and the 2030 agenda may be a standard feature of future Global Sustainable Development Reports. There are chapters of the Report that illustrate the multiple interlinkages across the sustainable development goals. The Report provides a survey of scientific findings on a series of pressing sustainable development issues involving oceans, seas and marine resources and human well-being; the cross-cutting issue of disaster risk reduction; industrialization and its links to sustainable consumption and production; and innovative uses of big data in Africa. Chapter 6 highlights the state of the science-policy interface in countries in special situations. The Report also examines emerging issues from various perspectives.

25. The Global Sustainable Development Report was discussed at the forum. Member States underlined that the Report should inform intergovernmental discussions and should be clearly linked to the implementation, follow-up and review of the sustainable development goals, focusing in particular, on the interlinkages of the goals and identifying emerging issues. Thematic chapters could be linked to the agenda of the high-level political forum.

26. The inclusive approach of the 2015 edition of the Global Sustainable Development Report was welcomed by Member States, who stated that the Report should continue to be produced in collaboration with all relevant United Nations organizations in particular, draw on peer-reviewed sources and avoid duplication of the content of other reports.

27. Regarding the periodicity of the Report, some Member States expressed a preference for a yearly issuance, while others preferred that it be issued only every four years so as to be aligned with the meeting of the forum under the auspices of the General Assembly. A combination of possibilities was also considered.

28. Subsequently, in the 2030 agenda, to be considered by the General Assembly at the United Nations summit for the adoption of the post-2015 development agenda, the President of the Economic and Social Council was invited to conduct a process of consultations on the scope, methodology and frequency of the Report as

[3] Available from https://sustainabledevelopment.un.org/content/documents/1758GSDR%202015%20Advance%20Unedited%20Version.pdf.

well as its relation to the progress report on the sustainable development goals, the outcome of which should be reflected in the 2016 ministerial declaration of the forum (para. 83).

D. Sustainable consumption and production

29. The United Nations Conference on Sustainable Development, in paragraph 226 of its outcome document, adopted the 10-year framework of programmes on sustainable consumption and production patterns (A/CONF.216/5, annex). The General Assembly in its resolution 69/214 requested that the reporting of the board of the 10-year framework of programmes and its secretariat be made to the high-level forum through the Economic and Social Council. The progress report on the 10-year framework of programmes for 2015 was contained in a note by the Secretary-General dated 31 March 2015 (E/2015/56).

30. The high-level political forum, at its 2015 meeting, convened, under the auspices of the Economic and Social Council, an interactive dialogue on sustainable consumption and production which included reporting by the Chair of the board of the 10-year framework of programmes. Member States stressed that sustainable consumption and production constitute an integral and cross-cutting theme within the sustainable development goals framework, which is mirrored in national sustainable consumption and production uptake in policies and programmes. It was recognized that sustainable consumption and production require government support and have to be incorporated in budget and planning systems. Citizens should be engaged in fostering change in values and behaviours. The involvement of the private sector, especially small and medium-sized enterprises, was perceived as critical to success. Member States recognized the progress made in the implementation of the 10-year framework of programmes and highlighted that it should be fully utilized as a global mechanism for advancing the implementation of sustainable consumption and production. The sustainable consumption and production platform for small island developing States under the framework was found to be a useful initiative. A key role for the forum in the future will be to provide the 10-year framework of programmes with leadership and strategic directions.

E. Regional forums on sustainable development

31. For the high-level political forum to fully respond to its mandate, it needs to provide a space for capturing the regional dimension of sustainable development. The General Assembly mandated the regional commissions to contribute to the work of the forum, including through annual regional meetings. The regional commissions and their subsidiary bodies are critical in bringing concerted regional voices and perspectives to the global level. They can also play an important role in establishing an effective link between the national and global levels for implementation, follow-up and review of the 2030 agenda, given their ability to tap into the involvement of a broad range of stakeholders.

32. Since the holding of the United Nations Conference on Sustainable Development, the members of the regional commissions have established regional

forums on sustainable development in three regions.[4] A regional forum was also held by the Economic Commission for Latin America and the Caribbean (ECLAC) and future modalities are currently being discussed in ECLAC. The regional forums are multi-stakeholder platforms and represent an important step in further fostering regional voices on the implementation and follow-up and review of the 2030 agenda for sustainable development.

33. The reports on the second cycle of regional forums are contained in a note by the Secretariat (E/HLPF/2015/3).

F. Partnerships and voluntary commitments

34. The outcome document of the United Nations Conference on Sustainable Development duly acknowledged that partnerships and voluntary commitments for sustainable development were complementary to the political outcome. The Secretary-General was invited to establish and maintain a comprehensive registry of voluntary initiatives, which was to be periodically updated, fully transparent and accessible to the public.

35. The United Nations Secretariat accordingly launched the Sustainable Development in Action Registry shortly after the Conference. The Registry, which contains detailed descriptions of all registered voluntary initiatives, also facilitates access to other registries and initiatives or "action networks" that promote sustainable development and that have catalysed voluntary commitments around specific themes. These include the Sustainable Energy for All initiative, the United Nations Global Compact, the Every Woman, Every Child initiative, the Higher Education Sustainability Initiative, the Action Network on Sustainable Transport and the partnerships for small island developing States that emerged from the third International Conference on Small Island Developing States.

36. In addition, since the holding of the United Nations Conference on Sustainable Development, the Secretariat has prepared three annual special reports on the progress of multi-stakeholder partnerships and voluntary commitments directed towards working towards sustainable development. The reports, entitled "Sustainable Development in Action", also identify trends in this area of work.[5]

37. In the post-2015 development era, multi-stakeholder partnerships are expected to play an increasingly important role in the implementation of sustainable development. Sustainable development goal 17 recognizes multi-stakeholder partnerships as important vehicles for mobilizing and sharing the knowledge, expertise, technologies and financial resources required to support the achievement of the sustainable development goals in all countries, particularly developing countries.

38. The third International Conference on Small Island Developing States underlined the importance of genuine and durable partnerships. In paragraph 101 of

[4] The Economic and Social Commission for Western Asia (ESCWA), Economic and Social Commission for Asia and the Pacific (ESCAP) and Economic Commission for Africa (ECA) regions. The Economic Commission for Europe (ECE) dedicated a session to the theme of the high-level political forum.

[5] The latest (2015) report is available from https://sustainabledevelopment.un.org/sdinaction/2015report.

its outcome document, entitled "SIDS Accelerated Modalities of Action (SAMOA) Pathway",[6] the Conference requested the Secretary-General, in consultation with Member States, to present recommendations, including through the use of existing intergovernmental mechanisms, for a partnership framework to monitor and ensure the full implementation of pledges and commitments through partnerships for small island developing States. On 25 June 2015, Maldives, as the chair of the Alliance of Small Island States, hosted, with the Department of Economic and Social Affairs of the Secretariat, a special event on small island developing States partnerships. Member States and United Nations system entities reported on small island developing States partnerships and emphasized that a robust review and follow-up of such partnerships need to be underpinned by data collection and data analysis. The General Assembly provided further guidance on the framework in its resolution 69/217, in which it emphasized that the partnership framework should be open and adaptable to the priorities and realities of small island developing States and consistent with other relevant processes and mechanisms in order to promote efficient and effective follow-up to the partnerships launched at the third International Conference, and to encourage new, genuine and durable partnerships for the sustainable development of small island developing States. The Secretary-General accordingly made recommendations for initial consideration of the framework based on the responses to a survey and comments made at a small island developing States partnership dialogue held before the high-level political forum. Those included: (a) form an informal group, or a "Friends of SIDS", to support the follow-up of existing small island developing States partnerships, and promote and advocate for the launch of new ones; (b) organize, on an annual basis, an action-oriented, results-focused informal multi-stakeholder small island developing States partnership dialogue as a half- or full-day event, within existing resources, at the margins of the meetings of the forum under the auspices of the Economic and Social Council; (c) organize regional multi-stakeholder small island developing States partnership dialogues through existing forums notably the regional commissions (ESCAP, ECLAC and ECA), in close collaboration with small island developing States and partners; (d) encourage the organization of national multi-stakeholder small island developing States partnership dialogues; (e) develop a standardized reporting mechanism for partnership progress reports; and (f) continue to maintain and further develop the Small Island Developing States Action Platform.

39. As mandated by the SAMOA Pathway, the Department of Economic and Social Affairs developed the Small Island Developing States Action Platform, which hosts all of the partnerships that stemmed from the Conference. It also includes the United Nations Implementation Matrix, a tool that focuses on areas for actions by United Nations entities and identifies associated lead responsibility for and links to existing and new partnerships.

G. Major groups and other stakeholders

40. Building on the practices of the United Nations Conference on Sustainable Development, and the Open Working Group on Sustainable Development Goals, the process whose purpose is to elaborate a post-2015 development agenda has been marked by an unprecedented openness and engagement of civil society.

[6] General Assembly resolution 69/15, annex.

41. The high-level political forum is positioned to continue to carry forward this inclusive and participatory approach. Ambitious provisions were outlined in General Assembly resolution 67/290 on the participation of major groups and other stakeholders in the forum's work. Building on the practices of the Commission on Sustainable Development with respect to engaging the nine major groups in its work, there has also been an increased engagement of diverse actors, groups and networks of civil society in the post-2015 development agenda negotiations.

42. As mandated by the General Assembly in its resolution 67/290, major groups and other relevant stakeholders submitted discussion papers to the 2015 meeting of the high-level political forum HLPF on the forum's theme (E/HLPF/2015/2). Major groups and other stakeholders also formed an informal open-ended working group to coordinate their preparations for the forum, including the selection of lead discussants and other speakers for the different sessions.

43. In June 2015, the working group also organized a workshop to explore new coordination structures and forms of collaboration among the major groups and other stakeholders that would fit the needs of the high-level political forum and support its work from multiple perspectives.

III. Mainstreaming of the three dimensions of sustainable development by the United Nations system

44. The United Nations Conference on Sustainable Development called for the further mainstreaming of the three dimensions of sustainable development throughout the United Nations system, and requested the Secretary-General to report through the Economic and Social Council to the General Assembly on progress made in that regard.

45. The third report of the Secretary-General on the topic (A/70/75-E/2015/55) was issued on 30 March 2015. Building upon the findings contained in the two previous reports (A/68/79-E/2013/69 and A/69/79-E/2014/66), that report highlighted how the new sustainable development goals can inject new impetus for cooperation and the mainstreaming of sustainable development throughout the United Nations system. The report placed a strong focus on strategic plans as core instruments for mainstreaming integrated approaches in various entities. It looked ahead at how to enhance the role of existing evidence-based evaluation functions in assessing progress against the post-2015 development agenda.

46. The report examined efforts of inter-agency coordination mechanisms to support Member States with coherent and integrated thinking as was the case during the sessions of the Open Working Group on Sustainable Development Goals. The impact of the post-2015 development agenda and the sustainable development goals is already being felt across the United Nations system. At the same time, the United Nations needs to further strengthen its efforts to prepare for delivering country-level support, helping Governments to deliver the new development agenda at home, and review progress at all levels. The report highlighted ongoing efforts of the United Nations system to adjust its modus operandi, examined the role of the quadrennial comprehensive periodic review and the need to learn from Millennium Development Goals follow-up processes.

47. The report recommended that the Secretary-General map United Nations system support across the sustainable development goals, as part of the next quadrennial comprehensive periodic review survey and seek the views of programme countries on how effectively the United Nations is supporting them in developing integrated policies and institutions for achieving the sustainable development goals. It also recommended that the United Nations system and its governing bodies assess the balance among economic, social and environmental issues in their work, align their strategic plans with the sustainable development goals and the post-2015 development agenda and break silos in their work. It is also important that the United Nations system implement the framework developed by the Environment Management Group for advancing environmental and social sustainability in the United Nations system. Innovative inter-agency arrangements will be needed to support the work of the high-level political forum and other intergovernmental platforms, building on the experience and approach of the technical support team that assisted the Open Working Group on Sustainable Development Goals.

IV. Preparing the high-level political forum for the post-2015 era: next steps

48. Clearly, based on the current year's high-level political forum debates, the 2019 meeting of the forum, under the auspices of General Assembly, will need to be a landmark event. In order to ensure this, the annual meetings of the forum under the auspices of the Economic and Social Council during the period 2016-2019 will need to conduct (a) comprehensive, effective and inclusive reviews of individual sustainable development goals or related cross-cutting themes, with all goals reviewed in a four-year cycle and (b) national voluntary reviews of implementation of the entire agenda, while also promoting implementation providing high-level political guidance and recommendations, increasing the science-policy interface, addressing new issues and discharging its other functions. An effective and innovative Global Sustainable Development Report will be critical.

49. The ideas expressed by the participants in the 2015 meeting of the high-level political forum to gear the forum for the fulfilment of its role after 2015 represent a useful complement to the guidance that will be provided by the outcome document of the United Nations summit for the adoption of the post-2015 development agenda.

50. Yet, in order for the forum to fully deliver on its mandates, important steps will need to be taken by Member States in the short to medium term. During the meeting of the forum, some Member States suggested that there was a need to elaborate a road map focusing on how to prepare for the 2016 meeting of the forum and realize the vision for the forum. This road map was also mandated by the 2030 agenda. The present section highlights some of the ideas in this regard, including those that were put forth by forum participants.

Empowering the forum to provide high-level political guidance

51. The creation of the high-level political forum responded to the need to elevate discussions on sustainable development at the United Nations to the highest level. The adoption of the 2030 agenda, centred on sustainable development, reinforces

this need. Therefore, in going forward, it will be critical to ensure that the high-level political forum can deliver on its function, which is to provide high-level political guidance and recommendations for sustainable development.

Defining a programme of work and themes

52. During the 2015 meeting of the forum, Member States stated that it is important that the programme of the forum directly address issues of relevance to all countries.

53. In the coming few years, the forum will need to further elaborate the functioning of the review architecture and define its working methods. In this regard:

- In order to ensure that a full, in-depth picture is obtained of the progress on all 17 sustainable development goals, within a four-year forum cycle, a subset of sustainable development goals would be reviewed in a given year, with the help of diverse intergovernmental thematic platforms, making use of the integrative strength of the goals. This could follow the goals in numerical sequence (e.g., review of four goals per year, with goal 17 examined every year).

- Nexus approaches: these would entail looking in depth at connections among a subset of sustainable development goal areas and examining the status of scientific knowledge on the various links (see ch p. 3 of the 2015 Global Sustainable Development Report). In turn, the themes could be chosen to highlight issues that are coming up for consideration in the international agenda (e.g., cities in 2016); and the clusters would have to be flexible (ad hoc) in order to yield the highest value added (e.g., with respect to addressing "orphan" issues, as mentioned by some countries during the forum meeting). For example, there would be many interesting nexuses centred on cities. The challenge in following this approach is that a theme would need to be identified and agreed by Member States, leaving little time for the relevant intergovernmental platforms, the functional commissions of the Economic and Social Council and other forums to meaningfully prepare their inputs into such debates.

- Cross-cutting issues: this would entail analysing a topic area in relation to the whole sustainable development goals system (see chap. 4 of the 2015 Global Sustainable Development Report where this was carried out for disaster risk reduction). It could be applied to, e.g., migration, which was mentioned in this regard during the 2015 meeting of the forum. In this case, the comprehensive thematic review of the sustainable development goals would have to be conducted separately.

- A variant of this approach would entail "systemic exploration of one sustainable development goal area", which would involve examining one goal and its connections with the other goals in a systematic manner. In particular, this approach could also be applied to "old" sustainable development goals (education, health, etc.), which were components of the Millennium Development Goals, in order to provide a new perspective on the topics under consideration. This approach would allow for the identification of gaps in the scientific coverage of some of the links among the sustainable development

goals, as well as in terms of coverage of the links by the United Nations system.

For each of the options above, the preparatory documentation could include one chapter of that year's Global Sustainable Development Report. Additional insights could be gained by producing focused documents (or Report chapters) which would examine the topic from the perspective of "emerging issues", "countries in special situations", "science-policy interface", "sustainable development scenarios and modelling" and "stocktaking of innovative data approaches". In this way, the Report could support a comprehensive overview of the subjects at hand, allowing for forward-looking discussions which would integrate the perspective of various country groups.

The forum should provide for a dual-track approach, with identification of some themes three or four years in advance so as to allow for serious preparatory work, and a space within which to accommodate burning emerging issues.

54. It would be important that the theme for the 2016 meeting of the political forum, under the auspices of the Economic and Social Council, and, ideally, those for 2017, 2018 and 2019, be decided by Member States as soon as possible, in order to enable time to be dedicated to preparations and allow for meaningful engagement of all stakeholders.

55. The forum would also need to discuss how to concretely address new and emerging issues. Several options in this regard are highlighted in the 2014 and 2015 editions of the Global Sustainable Development Report.

Refining the methods of work of the forum

56. At the meeting of the forum, several Member States stated that the forum preparatory process should benefit from the full participation of Member States and be inclusive and transparent. This would ensure broad ownership of the forum's programme, meeting and outcomes. Some felt adequate mechanisms should be developed.

Review and follow-up of major summits and conferences on sustainable development

57. Despite their comprehensiveness, the sustainable development goals do not cover every sustainable commitment emerging from the United Nations Conference on Sustainable Development and other major international conferences on various dimensions of sustainable development. For example, the sustainable development goals make no explicit reference to mining, an issue that is addressed in the outcome document of the United Nations Conference on Sustainable Development (paras. 227 and 228). Guidance will be needed from Member States on how to efficiently cover such issues, while building on the 2030 agenda framework and the thematic coherence it provides.

58. Within specific areas of the sustainable development goals, the outcome document of the United Nations Conference on Sustainable Development provides useful guidance on concrete actions that need to be taken in order to achieve a particular target and the broader goal. For example, in the case of sustainable development goal 2, "End hunger, achieve food security and improve nutrition and promote sustainable agriculture", which provides deadlines for achieving the

targets, the section of the outcome document of the United Nations Conference on Sustainable Development on food security and sustainable agriculture and nutrition includes a number of specific actions that, if executed, would contribute to realizing the goal. Other detailed policy guidance will be provided by the expert analysis related to goal-related thematic platforms.

59. Similarly, the SAMOA Pathway, the Vienna Programme of Action for Landlocked Developing Countries for the Decade 2014-2024 and the Programme of Action for the Least Developed Countries for the Decade 2011-2020, adopted at the Fourth United Nations Conference on the Least Developed Countries, held in Istanbul in May 2011, as documented in chapter 6 of the 2015 Global Sustainable Development Report 2015, include concrete actions that can provide valuable guidance for the implementation of the sustainable development goals at all levels.

60. Prior to the adoption of the 2030 agenda, the General Assembly decided that the forum shall, inter alia, follow up and review progress in the implementation of sustainable development commitments from major United Nations conferences and summits in the economic, social and environmental fields, as well as their respective means of implementation (General Assembly resolution 67/290, para. 7 (d)). It is to be expected that a thorough and focused review of the agreed 2030 agenda within the forum, building on the detailed review activities of other intergovernmental bodies and platforms, including the Economic and Social Council and the Assembly, would make a substantial contribution towards fulfilling that particular mandate. At the same time, the forum is tasked with other mandates, not least of which is appropriate consideration of new and emerging sustainable development challenges.

Concrete preparation for the follow-up and reviews

61. The forum will play a decisive role in following up progress on the implementation of the new agenda. In doing so, the forum should build on the experience derived from existing review mechanisms.

62. As noted above, in the 2030 agenda for sustainable development, adopted for consideration by the General Assembly at the September 2015 summit, the Secretary-General, in consultation with Member States, is tasked with preparing a report, for consideration at the seventieth session of the Assembly in preparation for the 2016 meeting of the high-level political forum, which outlines critical milestones towards coherent, efficient, and inclusive follow-up and review at the global level. That report should include a proposal on the organizational arrangements for State-led reviews at the high-level political forum under the auspices of the Economic and Social Council, including recommendations on voluntary common reporting guidelines. It should clarify institutional responsibilities and provide guidance on annual themes, on a sequence of thematic reviews, and on options for periodic reviews for the forum.

63. With respect to the thematic reviews, it could be useful, as illustrated by the Global Sustainable Development Report, to systematically factor multiple perspectives into thematic reviews, including on emerging issues, countries in special situations, middle-income countries and regional perspectives, the science-policy interface, insights from sustainable development scenarios and modelling, and stocktaking of innovative data approaches. In this way, the Report could support a comprehensive overview of the subjects at hand, allowing for forward-looking

discussions which would integrate the latest science, knowledge and lessons derived from experience.

Finding concrete ways to strengthen the science-policy interface

64. The forum will need to further discuss how it intends to strengthen the science-policy interface, pursuant to its mandate. Chapter 1 of the 2015 Global Sustainable Development Report provides a detailed menu of options and possible actions in this regard. This being the case, it could be a useful starting point for reflections in that direction. Ideas also emerged on this subject from the forum meeting.

Providing the high-level political forum with adequate support

65. The forum needs to be strengthened in order to properly fulfil its roles. In order to deliver on its ambitious functions, the forum will need a strong, efficient and well-equipped secretariat.

66. During the 2015 meeting of the forum, some Member States stated that the forum will need to be adequately resourced. In December 2015, Member States will approve the regular budget of the United Nations for the biennium 2016-2017. This should be taken into account.

V. Conclusions and recommendations

67. Progress has thus been achieved in follow-up to the United Nations Conference on Sustainable Development, in particular with respect to the definition of the post-2015 development agenda and the role of the forum. The 2030 agenda for sustainable development, to be considered by the General Assembly at the United Nations summit for the adoption of the post-2015 development agenda, to be held in September 2015, has addressed this issue by assigning a mandate to the President of the Economic and Social Council to conduct consultations on the Global Sustainable Development Report and to the Secretary-General to produce the report described above.

68. In addition, the General Assembly may consider, at its seventieth session:

(a) Inviting Member States and other stakeholders to fully engage in and support the work of the forum as it prepares to exercise its role in full in 2016, and to provide political leadership, guidance and recommendations for sustainable development;

(b) Calling on Member States and other stakeholders to ensure that their engagement in the work of the forum enhances the integration of the three dimensions of sustainable development by involving the economic, social and environmental policymaking communities intensively and in an integrative manner;

(c) Inviting the President of the Economic and Social Council to launch an informal process of the forum to enable reflection on how the forum, in addition to being the central locus for the follow-up of the sustainable development goals, also strengthens and supports the intergovernmental platforms related to the outcomes of the major United Nations conferences on sustainable development, including that of the United Nations Conference on Sustainable Development, the SAMOA Pathway

and the Programme of Action for the Least Developed Countries for the Decade 2011-2020, in accordance with its mandate. Such reflection could continue during the first week of the 2016 meeting of the forum;

(d) Deciding that forum national implementation reviews in 2016 should focus on how countries are transitioning to and preparing to implement the sustainable development goals;

(e) Also deciding the theme for the forum's 2016 meeting under the auspices of the Economic and Social Council, as well as, possibly, its programme of work until 2019, when the forum will meet under the auspices of the General Assembly. Alternatively, the Assembly could entrust the President of the Council with defining the theme based on broad consultations;

(f) Inviting the President of the Economic and Social Council to take the necessary actions to prepare the meeting of the forum in a transparent and inclusive manner, engaging all member States as well as major groups and other stakeholders. The General Assembly could also consider inviting the President of the Council to make proposals to the forum at its 2016 meeting on how such a preparatory process might be institutionalized in the future and made effective and robust at all levels, with support from a strong United Nations inter-agency process;

(g) Calling on the United Nations system to make further efforts to integrate economic, social and environmental dimensions of sustainable development in its work, including through undertaking reviews of United Nations system support to the 2030 agenda for sustainable development, and inviting the Secretary-General to report on these efforts to the forum, the Economic and Social Council and the General Assembly at its seventy-first session as part of his report on mainstreaming sustainable development in the work of the United Nations system;

(h) Inviting the Economic and Social Council to decide on how the work of its various segments and subsidiary bodies will best contribute to promoting and implementing progress on the sustainable development goals, notably at the forum;

(i) Reviewing its own agenda and working methods so that its work reflects the issue of sustainable development and the 2030 agenda for sustainable development.

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Item 132 of the provisional agenda*
Review of the efficiency of the administrative and financial functioning of the United Nations

Activities of the Independent Audit Advisory Committee for the period from 1 August 2014 to 31 July 2015

Report of the Independent Audit Advisory Committee

Summary

The present report covers the period from 1 August 2014 to 31 July 2015. During the period, the Independent Audit Advisory Committee held four sessions, which were presided over by J. Christopher Mihm, Jr. (United States of America) as Chair and Patricia X. Arriagada Villouta (Chile) as Vice-Chair. Mr. Mihm was re-elected Chair, and Ms. Arriagada was elected as Vice-Chair for 2015. The year 2015 saw the appointment by the General Assembly of one new member, Richard Quartei Quartey (Ghana), to replace John F. S. Muwanga (Uganda), whose term had expired on 31 December 2014. As has been the case during the history of the Committee, all members attended all of the sessions during their appointments.

Section II of the report contains an overview of the activities of the Committee, the status of its recommendations, and its plans for 2016. Section III sets out the detailed comments of the Committee, including in response to the specific request of the General Assembly to examine the operational independence of the Office of Internal Oversight Services, in particular in the area of investigation.

* A/70/150.

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I. Introduction

1. The General Assembly, by its resolution 60/248, established the Independent Audit Advisory Committee as a subsidiary body to serve in an expert advisory capacity and to assist it in fulfilling its oversight responsibilities. By its resolution 61/275, the Assembly approved the terms of reference for the Committee, as well as the criteria for its membership, as contained in the annex to that resolution. In accordance with its terms of reference, the Committee is authorized to hold up to four sessions per year. To date, the Committee has held 31 sessions since its inception, in January 2008.

2. In accordance with its terms of reference, the Committee submits an annual report containing a summary of its activities and related advice to the General Assembly. The present eighth annual report covers the period from 1 August 2014 to 31 July 2015.

3. In its resolution 68/21, the General Assembly, recalling paragraph 13 of its resolution 64/263, requested the Committee, in the context of its terms of reference, to continue to provide advice to the Assembly on relevant issues relating to the effectiveness, efficiency and impact of the audit activities and other oversight functions of the Office of Internal Oversight Services (OIOS) as it deemed necessary. In addition, in paragraph 67 of its resolution 69/307, the Assembly invited the Committee to examine the operational independence of OIOS, in particular in the area of investigation. The observations, comments and recommendations of the Committee in that respect are contained in section III.C of the present report.

4. The Committee is required to advise the General Assembly on, among others, the compliance of management with audit and other oversight recommendations; the overall effectiveness of the risk management procedures and deficiencies in the internal control systems; the operational implications of the financial statements and the reports of the Board of Auditors; and the appropriateness of the accounting and disclosure practices in the Organization. The Committee also advises the Assembly on the steps necessary to facilitate cooperation among the oversight bodies.

5. The present report addresses the issues identified during the reporting period as they pertain to the above-mentioned responsibilities of the Committee.

II. Activities of the Independent Audit Advisory Committee

A. Overview of the sessions of the Committee

6. During the reporting period, the Committee held four sessions: from 10 to 12 December 2014 (twenty-eighth session), from 18 to 20 February 2015 (twenty-ninth session), from 27 to 29 April 2015 (thirtieth) and from 8 to 10 July 2015 (thirty-first session). All of the sessions were held at United Nations Headquarters.

7. The Committee functions under its adopted rules of procedure, as contained in the annex to its first annual report (A/63/328). To date, all members of the Committee have a 100 per cent attendance rate at its sessions. All the decisions of the Committee have been unanimous; however, its rules of procedure make

provision for members to record their dissent with respect to decisions taken by the majority.

8. During the twenty-eighth session, in December 2014, the members re-elected J. Christopher Mihm, Jr. (United States of America) as Chair and elected Patricia X. Arriagada Villouta (Chile) as Vice-Chair for 2015. Additional information about the Committee can be found on its website (www.un.org/ga/iaac) in all the official languages of the United Nations.

9. Since its establishment, the Committee has submitted 20 reports to the General Assembly, 3 of which were submitted during the reporting period. They include the Committee's annual report to the Assembly for the period from 1 August 2013 to 31 July 2014 (A/69/304) and reports to the Assembly, through the Advisory Committee on Administrative and Budgetary Questions, on the proposed budget of OIOS under the support account for peacekeeping operations for the period from 1 July 2015 to 30 June 2016 (A/69/791) and on the proposed programme budget for internal oversight for the biennium 2016-2017 (A/70/86).

B. Status of the recommendations of the Committee

10. Although it meets only four times per year, typically for three days at each session, the Committee has accomplished important achievements to date, particularly in relation to enterprise risk management and the operations of OIOS. The Committee follows up on the implementation of its recommendations as a standard agenda item at each session and looks forward to seeing the full effects of the actions taken by management and by OIOS. Some of the significant recommendations made by the Committee during the reporting period relate to:

(a) The need for OIOS to establish a long-term strategic plan that would address the following issues: strategic goals that are aligned with key United Nations risks that management had identified and the latest transformational initiatives of the Secretariat; a focus on the Organization's major challenges, such as fraud; and annual goals for each division consistent with the strategic plan;

(b) The need for OIOS to address its persistently high vacancy rates, especially in the Investigations Division;

(c) The need for OIOS to address the delays in completing investigations;

(d) The need for OIOS to address the resource disparity in the Inspection and Evaluation Division;

(e) The decision to strengthen the investigation function (for example by moving responsibility for conducting all investigations to OIOS) to be made after the outstanding report on the terms of reference pertaining to strengthening investigation is completed;

(f) The need for OIOS to improve its website and make it more functional and to continue publishing internal audit reports and consider publishing OIOS evaluation reports;

(g) The need for programme managers to set and adhere to realistic target dates for the implementation of OIOS recommendations;

(h) The need for senior managers to ensure that enterprise risk management becomes the standard way of doing business and that it is effectively implemented and sustained throughout the Organization;

(i) The need for the Organization to monitor key milestones and the overall timeline for the implementation of Umoja by identifying and managing current and any emerging key risks to the achievement of the objectives of the project;

(j) The need for the oversight bodies to consider developing short topical or organization-specific fact sheets that bring together in one place short synopses by each of the oversight bodies that are relevant to the topic or organization.

C. Overview of the plans of the Committee for 2016

11. The Committee undertook its responsibilities, as set out in its terms of reference, in accordance with the scheduling of the sessions of the Advisory Committee on Administrative and Budgetary Questions and the General Assembly. The Committee will continue to schedule its sessions and activities to ensure coordinated interaction with intergovernmental bodies and the timely availability of its reports. In a preliminary review of its workplan, the Committee identified several key areas that will be the main focus for each of its four sessions for fiscal year 2016 (see the table below).

Workplan of the Committee for 2016

Session	*Key focus area*	*Intergovernmental consideration of the report of the Committee*
Thirty-second	Review of the 2016 workplan of OIOS in the light of the workplans of other oversight bodies	Advisory Committee on Administrative and Budgetary Questions, first quarter 2016 General Assembly, second part of the resumed seventieth session
	Proposed budget of OIOS under the support account for peacekeeping operations for the period from 1 July 2016 to 30 June 2017	
	Operational implications of issues and trends in the financial statements and reports of the Board of Auditors	
	Coordination and cooperation among oversight bodies	
	Election of the Chair and Vice-Chair for 2016	
Thirty-third	Status of implementation of oversight bodies' recommendations	General Assembly, second part of the resumed seventieth session
	Report of the Committee on OIOS budget	
	Review of the enterprise risk management and internal control framework in the Organization	

Session	*Key focus areas*	*Intergovernmental consideration of the report of the Committee*
Thirty-fourth	Operational implications of issues and trends in the financial statements and reports of the Board of Auditors	General Assembly, second part of the resumed seventieth session
	Coordination and cooperation among oversight bodies	
	Transformational projects and other emerging issues	
Thirty-fifth	Preparation of the annual report of the Committee	General Assembly, main part of the seventy-first session
	Review of the enterprise risk management and internal control framework in the Organization	
	Status of implementation of oversight bodies' recommendations	
	Coordination and cooperation among oversight bodies	

12. In planning for 2016, the Committee is mindful of the following relevant events that could have an impact on its work activities:

(a) The decision by the General Assembly, in paragraph 6 of section II of its resolution 65/250, to review the terms of reference of the Committee;

(b) The various reform/transformational initiatives on which the Organization has embarked, such as mobility, the global field support strategy, the International Public Sector Accounting Standards (IPSAS) and Umoja.

D. Observations, comments and recommendations of the Independent Audit Advisory Committee on the terms of reference for the Committee

13. Subsequent to the establishment of the Independent Audit Advisory Committee at its sixtieth session, the General Assembly, by its resolution 61/275, approved the terms of reference for the Committee, as well as the criteria for its membership, as contained in the annex to that resolution. In the same resolution, the Assembly decided to review the terms of reference for the Committee at its sixty-fifth session.

14. In the annex to its report for the period from 1 August 2009 to 31 July 2010 (A/65/329), the Committee provided its observations, comments and recommendations on its terms of reference as laid out in resolution 61/275. After consideration of the report of the Committee, the Assembly, in paragraphs 4 and 6 of section II of its resolution 65/250, reaffirmed the terms of reference and decided to review them at its seventieth session.

15. At its thirty-first session, held in July 2015, the Committee unanimously agreed to provide its observations, comments and recommendations on the terms of reference, for review by the Assembly at its seventieth session.

16. After eight years of existence, the Committee has gained reasonable experience and believes that it is important for the Committee to have an advisory role in the selection of the head of OIOS. This is consistent with best practice.

17. **The Committee recommends that the Secretary-General, in selecting the head of OIOS, consult with the Committee to ensure that the candidates under consideration have relevant leadership expertise in the functions of internal audit, inspection and evaluation and investigation.**

III. Detailed comments of the Committee

A. Status of the recommendations of United Nations oversight bodies

18. Under paragraph 2 (b) of its terms of reference, the Committee is mandated to advise the General Assembly on measures to ensure the compliance of management with audit and other oversight recommendations. During the reporting period, the Committee reviewed the status of the implementation by management of the recommendations of United Nations oversight bodies, as a standard practice.

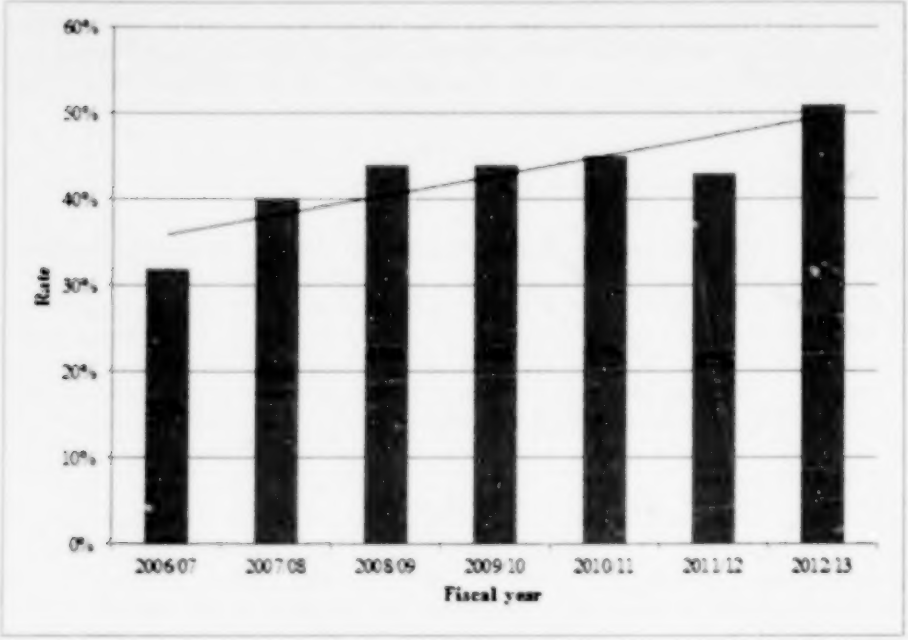
Board of Auditors

19. The Board of Auditors reported that the rate of implementation of recommendations for the 12-month period from 1 July 2012 to 30 June 2013 in respect of peacekeeping operations was 51 per cent, which is 8 per cent higher than the adjusted figure of 43 per cent[1] for the period ended 30 June 2012 (see figure I).

[1] In paragraph 14 of document A/69/304, the Committee reported that, according to the report of the Board of Auditors on the financial statements of United Nations peacekeeping operations for the 12-month period from 1 July 2012 to 30 June 2013 (A/68/5 (Vol. II)), the rate of implementation of recommendations in respect of peacekeeping operations was 55 per cent for the period ended 30 June 2012. However, in paragraph 10 of its report for the 12-month period from 1 July 2013 to 30 June 2014 (A/69/5 (Vol. II)), the Board adjusted that rate to 43 per cent to account for single recommendations.

Figure I

Implementation trends for the recommendations of the Board of Auditors with respect to peacekeeping operations



20. With respect to the regular budget, the Board, in compliance with IPSAS requirements, now reports annually rather than biennially. Consequently, there are no comparable trend analyses of the rate of implementation of regular budget recommendations.

21. The Board, in the summary of its report on the financial statements of the United Nations for the year ended 31 December 2014 (A/70/5 (Vol. I), chap. II), noted that management had fully implemented 5 (11 per cent) of the recommendations, while 19 (40 per cent) were under implementation, 18 (38 per cent) had not been implemented and 5 (11 per cent) had been closed. While noting the overall commitment of management to the implementation of its recommendations, the Board called for a more urgent implementation of the recommendations in such areas as strengthening counter-fraud measures, enterprise risk management, business transformation and financial management and accounting.

Main recommendations of the Board that are more than two years old

22. The Committee followed up with management regarding the recommendations that were two or more years old as at 31 March 2015 that were before the Management Committee. The Committee was informed that, of the 12 recommendations with respect to the regular budget that were before the Management Committee, 1 had been implemented, 2 had been either closed or overtaken by events and nine were in progress. According to management, the 9 outstanding main recommendations related mostly to ongoing projects, such as the implementation of enterprise risk management, IPSAS and Umoja, as well as

results-based budgeting. The Committee was also informed that only one recommendation pertaining to the capital master plan was before the Management Committee. That recommendation, which relates to flexible workspace strategies, was being implemented. With respect to peacekeeping operations, management indicated that there were no main recommendations outstanding for two or more years. Management informed the Committee that the Board was reviewing all the outstanding recommendations and planned to submit its report on the matter at the seventieth session of the General Assembly.

23. According to annex I to the Board's report (A/70/5 (Vol. I)), 19 recommendations were outstanding for more than two years as at July 2015, of which 6 had been either closed or implemented, 7 were under implementation and 6 had not been implemented. The Committee will follow up with management on the issue.

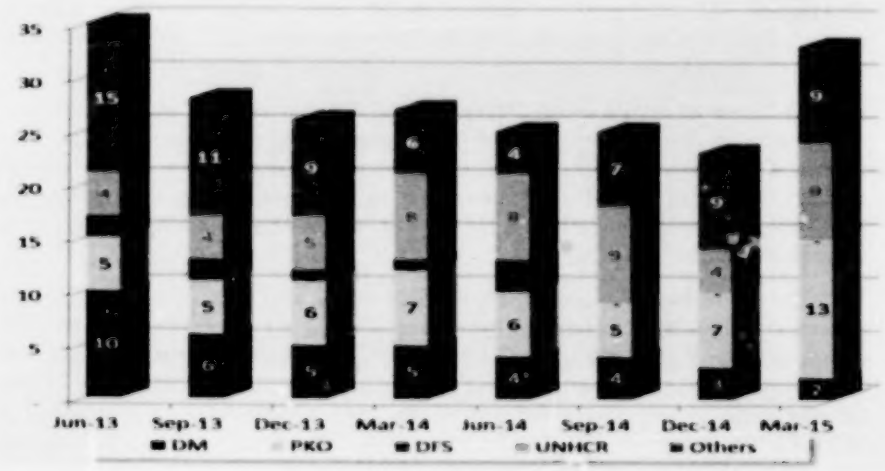
24. **The Committee continues to acknowledge the effort of the Management Committee to oversee the implementation of the Board's recommendations. The Committee agrees with the sentiments of the Board that the importance of the transformation projects under way calls for urgent implementation of the associated recommendations.**

Office of Internal Oversight Services

25. All recommendations categorized as "critical" by OIOS are brought to the attention of the Management Committee for follow-up action, and special focus is placed on those whose implementation is past due. The Committee receives quarterly updates from OIOS and the Department of Management on the implementation of critical recommendations. Figure II provides a quarterly trend analysis since June 2013 of the critical recommendations issued by OIOS that were past due.

Figure II

Analysis of critical recommendations whose implementation is past due



Abbreviations: DFS, Department of Field Support; DM, Department of Management; PKO, peacekeeping operations; UNHCR, Office of the United Nations High Commissioner for Refugees.

26. The critical recommendations addressed to the Department of Management that were past due exhibited a declining trend since the second quarter of 2013. However, critical recommendations related to peacekeeping missions and the Office of the United Nations High Commission for Refugees (UNHCR) showed an upward trend. At the same time, the number of critical recommendations that were past due in the first quarter of 2015 showed a sharp rise, reversing the declining trend in the previous quarters since September 2013.

27. As figure II shows, during the second quarter of 2013, 10 (28 per cent) of all critical recommendations that were past due involved the Department of Management, the peacekeeping missions' share was 5 (14 per cent) and UNHCR had 4 (11 per cent). In March 2015, the share of the Department of Management had declined to two recommendations (6 per cent). On the other hand, the number of critical recommendations relating to peacekeeping missions that were past due rose to 13 (39 per cent), and those addressed to UNHCR increased to 9 (27 per cent) during the same period. Critical recommendations that were past due related to such vital issues as the need to examine possible overpayment of contracts, information security controls, and customer service.

28. The Committee sought an explanation for those trends and was informed that the developments were due mainly to the increase in the number of unsatisfactory reports in the peacekeeping missions and UNHCR. According to OIOS, a rating of unsatisfactory meant that one or more critical deficiencies or pervasive important deficiencies existed in the governance, risk management or control process, such that reasonable assurance could not be provided with regard to the achievement of control and/or business objectives under review.

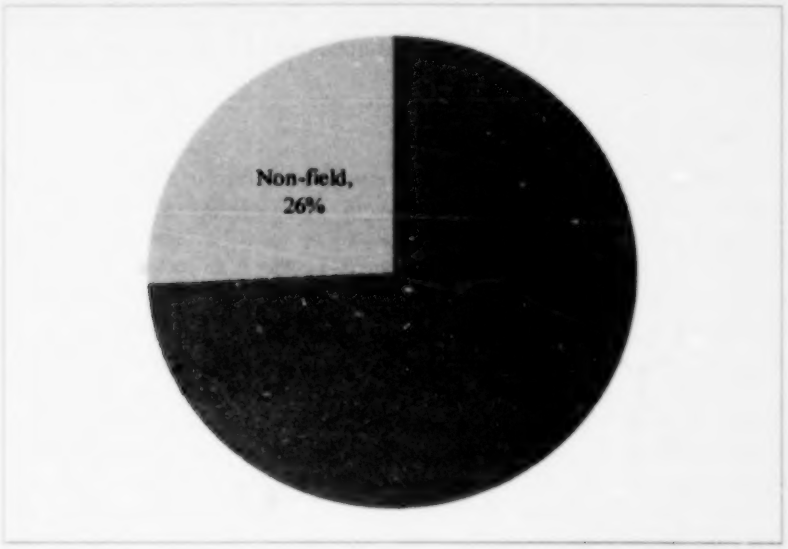
Trends in the audit report ratings

29. The Committee received a trend analysis of all reports issued by OIOS from when it introduced the rating system in the third quarter of 2011 to the first quarter of 2015. The Department of Management informed the Committee that the cumulative figures of OIOS audit reports showed that 70 reports were rated satisfactory, 383 were partially satisfactory, 89 were unsatisfactory and 13 were unrated. The Committee was also informed that the distribution of the cumulative overall ratings continued to be negatively skewed towards an unsatisfactory rating.

30. As figure III shows, nearly three quarters (74 per cent) of all unsatisfactory reports were in field assignments. The Department of Management noted that there seemed to be a relationship between the number of unsatisfactory reports and the hardship conditions in the field. Management also indicated that it was studying the issue to establish the underlining causes and would report to the Committee at subsequent sessions.

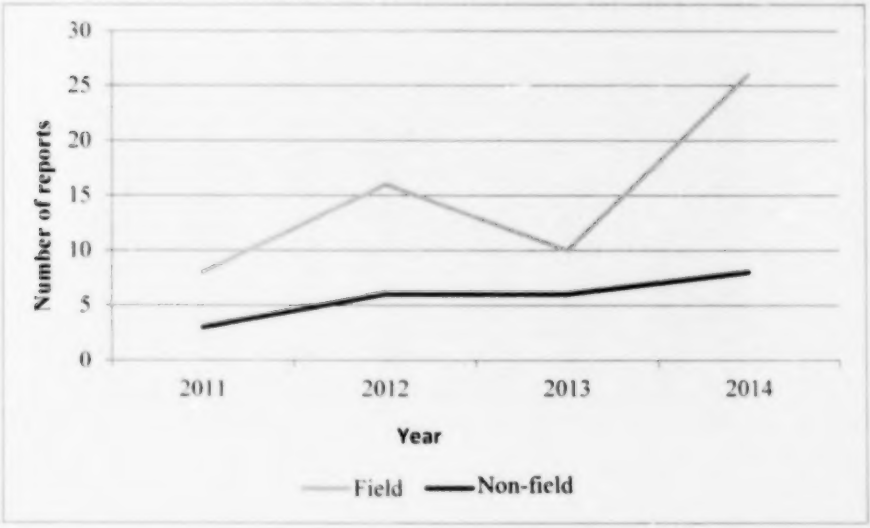
31. The Committee also sought the views of OIOS with respect to the negatively skewed distribution of unsatisfactory ratings of field reports. OIOS informed the Committee that it shared management's view that conditions in the field could be quite challenging in terms of operating environment, high staff turnover and higher vacancy rates, lower levels of experience, and security and accessibility of operations. Headquarters-based operations, on the other hand, usually involved safe and stable environments, lower turnover and vacancy rates, higher levels of experience and greater access to timely guidance and supervision.

Figure III
Cumulative distribution of unsatisfactory reports since 2011



32. Figure IV shows a trend analysis of the unsatisfactory ratings of field and non-field reports. As shown, most of the unsatisfactory ratings were associated with field operation reports, as opposed to headquarters ones.

Figure IV
Trend analysis of unsatisfactory reports issued for the period 2011-2014



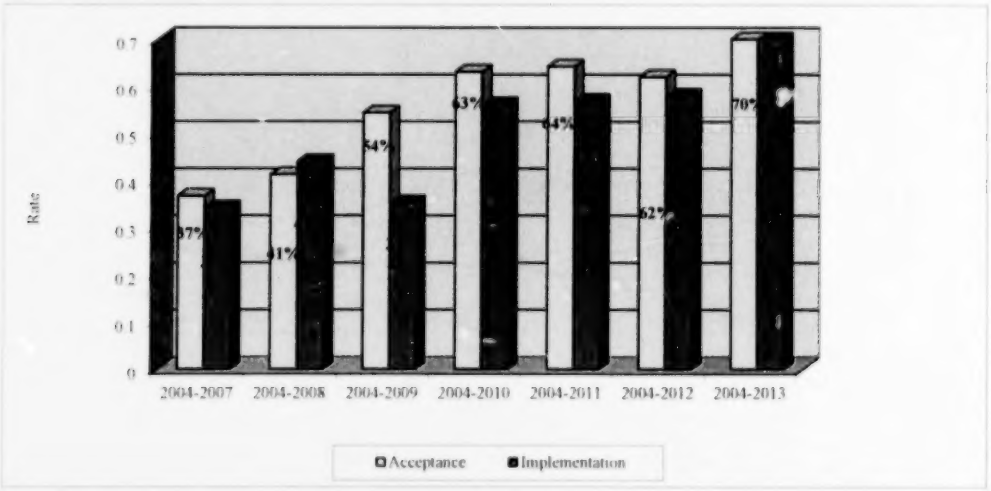
33. **The Committee is cognizant of the conditions in the field and the challenges faced by field operations, as stated in paragraph 30 and 31 above. Given the fact that field operations account for the largest amount of the Organization's transactions, the rise in the number of unsatisfactory reports is an issue of concern that calls for a concerted effort to address the weaknesses identified.**

Joint Inspection Unit

34. In its annual report for 2014 and programme of work for 2015 (A/69/34), the Joint Inspection Unit noted an improvement in the rates of acceptance and implementation of its system-wide recommendations by the 12 largest participating organizations for the eight years from 2006 to 2013, which reflected an average acceptance rate of 78 per cent and an average implementation rate of 80 per cent.

35. For the United Nations Secretariat, the average acceptance and implementation rates for the period 2006-2013 increased to about 70 per cent each, compared with 62.4 per cent and 60.2 per cent, respectively, for the period 2004-2012 (see figure V). The Administration noted that both the acceptance and implementation rates for the Secretariat were relatively lower than the average for the 12 largest participating organizations because they included recommendations that were addressed to both the governing bodies and the United Nations System Chief Executives Board for Coordination. In its resolution 69/252, the General Assembly endorsed the recommendations of the Committee, including that the Joint Inspection Unit, in its future reports, separately account for the recommendations addressed to the Assembly and the Chief Executives Board. The Committee will review the impact of the implementation of the resolution in its future reports.

Figure V
Status of acceptance/implementation of recommendations of the Joint Inspection Unit by the Secretariat



36. **Overall, there continues to be a steady improvement in both the rates of implementation and acceptance of the Joint Inspection Unit's recommendations. The Committee continues to commend management for improving the rates of implementation and acceptance of those recommendations.**

B. Risk management and internal control framework

37. Paragraphs 2 (f) and (g) of the terms of reference of the Committee (see General Assembly resolution 61/275, annex) mandate the Committee to advise the Assembly on the quality and overall effectiveness of risk management procedures and on deficiencies in the internal control framework of the United Nations.

Enterprise risk management

Key risk identification and the status of enterprise risk management

38. In paragraph 29 of its report for the period from 1 August 2012 to 31 July 2013 (A/68/273), the Committee recommended that, consistent with paragraph 24 of General Assembly resolution 66/257 and paragraph 32 of the report of the Advisory Committee on Administrative and Budgetary Questions (A/67/766), the Organization systematically identify the key risks that needed to be brought to the attention of the Assembly as a matter of priority. Furthermore, in paragraph 34 of document A/69/304, the Committee commended management for its efforts to break down silos and make enterprise risk management an integral and important management tool of the Organization.

39. During discussions with the Management Committee and the Department of Management, the Committee was updated on the progress made in that regard. Moreover, in paragraphs 40 to 45 of his third progress report on the accountability system in the United Nations Secretariat (A/68/697), the Secretary-General reported on the actions taken in this respect, including the establishment of a Secretariat-wide risk assessment process.

40. In part II of his fourth progress report on the subject (A/69/676), the Secretary-General identified six critical risks, relevant risk response strategies, corporate risk owners and a governance structure for enterprise risk management. The six key risks identified related to: organizational structure and synchronization; organizational transformation; strategic planning and budget allocation; safety and security; extrabudgetary funding and management; and human resources strategy, management and accountability.

41. The Committee was informed that a principal-level meeting of the corporate risk owners had been held under the chairmanship of the Deputy Secretary-General on 24 October 2014 to formally start the implementation process and ensure the continued coordination of the work of the groups. At its meeting on 25 June 2015, the Management Committee formally approved the consolidated risk treatment and response plans, as presented by the corporate risk owners, and decided to continue to periodically monitor their implementation.

42. **Given the progress that the Organization has made in defining enterprise risks, and consistent with its mandate to advise the General Assembly on the quality and overall effectiveness of risk management procedures, the Committee plans to delve more deeply over the next year into specific projects**

and plans that the Organization is putting in place to manage enterprise risk. Specifically, the Committee will select one or more of the six identified enterprise risks for detailed assessments of what is being done and what can be done to manage the risk. The Committee should thus be better able to provide the Assembly with perspective on selected major proposals earlier in the implementation process.

Risk mitigation and the silo effect

43. Given the interdependent nature of the various departments and offices in achieving the organizational goals and objectives, the Committee, in paragraph 45 of document A/68/273, recommended that the Management Committee and the Under-Secretary-General for Management, who was the official responsible for enterprise risk management in the Organization, undertake every effort to ensure a genuinely integrative approach to risk management that looked across the Organization's units and ensured a coordinated and comprehensive approach to identifying and managing risk. The Committee noted that success would be achieved only through a concerted push to break down or avoid silos, in other words, by managing the holistic portfolio of risk facing the Organization.

44. During the briefings, the Committee was informed that the primary critical risks that had been identified were cross-cutting and closely interrelated, hence requiring close coordination of efforts across the Organization. Management believes that this is critical in order to avoid potential overlap and ensure the recognition of possible synergies in terms of risk-mitigating actions. Consequently, under the guidance of the corporate risk owners, management noted that all of the risk treatment working groups refined the identification of relevant risk drivers, existing controls and response strategies and, most importantly, defined detailed risk treatment plans.

45. **The Committee continues to commend the enterprise risk management committee and management for their commitment in making enterprise risk management an integral and important management tool of the Organization. The Committee believes that top management will need to continue to actively lead enterprise risk management efforts to ensure that systematically identifying and managing risks becomes a standard way of doing business across the Organization. Moreover, the Committee fully agrees with the Board's observations contained in the summary of its most recent report (A/70/5 (Vol. I), chap. II) that further work is required to embed enterprise risk management in departments' day-to-day work.**

46. **The Committee reiterates its previous recommendation that the Secretary-General must ensure that his Office and the departments have the capacities they need to effectively implement and sustain enterprise risk management, or it risks becoming a paper exercise. The Committee will continue to follow up on those and other enterprise risk management issues as a major priority. Specifically, the Committee will pay attention to reviewing and documenting concrete examples of how enterprise risk management is being used in specific ways to manage organizational risks and better achieve results.**

C. Effectiveness, efficiency and impact of the audit activities and other functions of the Office of Internal Oversight Services

47. Under its terms of reference, the Committee has the responsibility to advise the General Assembly on aspects of internal oversight (resolution 61/275, annex, paras. 2 (c)-(e)). In undertaking to fulfil its mandate, the Committee has maintained its standard practice of meeting with the Under-Secretary-General for Internal Oversight Services and other senior OIOS officials during its sessions. The discussions have been focused on OIOS workplan and budget execution, with significant findings reported by OIOS, operational constraints (if any), post incumbency, the status of implementation by management of OIOS recommendations, including critical recommendations, strengthening investigations and funding arrangements.

48. In its resolution 68/21, the General Assembly, recalling paragraph 13 of its resolution 64/263, invited the Committee, in the context of its terms of reference, to continue to provide advice to the Assembly on relevant issues relating to the effectiveness, efficiency and impact of the audit activities and other oversight functions of OIOS, as it deemed necessary.

49. In the context of the Committee's terms of reference, the paragraphs below provide the comments, views and opinions of the Committee. The Committee focused its assessment on the operational independence, effectiveness, internal management and efficiency of OIOS.

Operational independence and effectiveness

50. In establishing OIOS, the General Assembly decided that the Office should exercise operational independence under the authority of the Secretary-General in the conduct of its duties (resolution 48/218 B, para. 5 (a)). The Assembly subsequently clarified that decision by emphasizing that the operational independence of OIOS was related to the performance of its internal oversight functions (resolution 54/244, para. 18).

51. In paragraph 67 of its resolution 69/307, the General Assembly invited the Committee to examine the operational independence of OIOS, in particular in the area of investigation. The request was made subsequent to the recent development involving the OIOS response to the sexual exploitation and abuse allegations in the Central African Republic. In responding, the Committee also looked at other matters in which the question of operational independence was raised. In assessing the operational independence of OIOS, the Committee took into account the Assembly's expectations of OIOS, best practices, the pronouncements of the relevant professional associations and the Committee members' own experience dealing directly with the issue as leaders in national audit offices.

52. In section III.A of the annex to its report for the period from 1 August 2008 to 31 July 2009 (A/64/288), the Committee provided an exhaustive explanation of what constituted operational independence, noting: "With regard to operational independence, OIOS should have an appropriate degree of real and perceived independence from the management of the United Nations and funds and programmes for which it provides oversight services. Operational independence includes, inter alia, the ability of OIOS to: determine its final workplans and the content of its final reports; make requests for adequate resources to undertake its

work; conduct its work with the cooperation of management and all applicable parties, free from intervention; select staff for the Office; and communicate directly to the General Assembly and the Secretary-General in connection with matters of critical importance to the United Nations and/or the Office."

53. In that report, the Committee noted that the definition of the term "independence" in the context of internal oversight at the United Nations should be central to clarifying the role and responsibilities of OIOS. **The Committee also reiterated a prior observation that independence and objectivity were vital to ensuring that stakeholders viewed the work performed, and its results, as credible, factual and unbiased.**

54. The Committee also noted that OIOS, like most internal oversight bodies, had a unique position in the Organization in that internal oversight staff were employed by the Organization but were expected to report on the conduct of its management. The Committee contended that such a relationship created an inherent tension, since the independence of the internal oversight functions from those of management was necessary for the objective evaluation of management's actions. As an example of the way in which that tension is manifested, under internationally accepted internal audit standards, advisory services are a widely accepted and proper part of the mandate of internal audit. However, such services must be carefully managed so as not to undermine the reality or the perception of the independence of the audit office.

55. As a result, in examining the operational independence of OIOS, the Committee's attention was focused on how OIOS handled real and perceived independence, especially in the light of recent developments and related concerns.

56. The Committee found that OIOS lacked agreed upon and clearly defined guidance and protocols on the "how and why" of striking the appropriate balance between advising management or commenting on issues that may be subject to audit or investigation, and the need to maintain both the reality and the perception of operational independence. The absence of agreed upon and clear guidance and protocols can result in OIOS inadvertently compromising its independence and/or understandable concerns about OIOS actions or statements on the part of key stakeholders, including Member States.

57. **The Committee believes that OIOS should work with management to develop and, subject to approval by the General Assembly, subsequently disseminate guidelines and protocols that it will use when advising management and making statements about situations that may be subject to audit or investigation. Such guidelines and protocols should, at a minimum, include a discussion of OIOS justification under internal audit standards for providing such services, the types of services that it will offer and how they will be provided, and steps that OIOS will take to safeguard its independence when offering such advice or statements.**

58. Relatedly, the Committee looked at the OIOS investigation process. Specifically, the Committee examined whether OIOS had established and issued guidelines that governed the investigation process. The Committee was informed that the Investigations Division did not have an official investigation manual and that the manual currently on the OIOS website was provisional, pending the promulgation of the revised administrative instruction ST/AI/371. The Committee understands that the provisional manual provides guidance until OIOS promulgates a final manual.

59. **Notwithstanding the fact that the provisional manual currently provides guidance, the Committee is concerned that the lack of a finalized investigation manual could create confusion about OIOS procedures and methods of operation. The Committee therefore recommends that OIOS finalize the investigation manual without delay.**

Investigation intake process

60. According to the provisional OIOS investigation manual, intake "is the first step in a comprehensive process that will be affected by how the initial information about possible misconduct, referred to as source information, is received and handled. The proper receipt and handling of source information at intake is, therefore, essential and includes:

- Clear and distinct means of receiving source information
- Systematic recording of source information
- Consistent review of source information for action
- Transparent and verifiable management of source information"

Predication

61. According to the provisional manual, predication is an important element of the intake process, and it provides that "reports of possible misconduct will be predicated. The predication process includes formal registration, evaluation and decision on appropriate disposition of the matter." The provisional manual requires that a case be properly registered and evaluated and a decision made on the appropriate steps. However, it does not clearly describe the internal process in OIOS for predicating reports of possible misconduct, including who has the authority and at what point in the intake process to predicate a matter for investigation.

62. **The operational independence of OIOS is vital in ensuring that stakeholders view the work and result of OIOS as credible, factual and unbiased. It is therefore important that all involved, namely OIOS, management, the General Assembly and other interested parties, have a common and clear understanding of how OIOS operates across the full range of services that it offers and the important contributions that it makes. As discussed above, the Committee believes that progress needs to be made in two areas: advice and public comments, and investigations procedures.**

A way forward

63. The Committee notes that all three divisions of OIOS have gone through several peer reviews in recent years. **However, the Committee is not aware of any formal reviews, other than the Committee's own work, that have systematically examined the OIOS as a whole and the working relationship across the divisions.** The Committee also notes that, since 2004, the Investigations Division has been the subject of four reviews initiated by the respective heads of OIOS. Those reviews have resulted in many recommendations aimed at improving the work of the Division. The most recent one was conducted in 2012 and resulted in recommendations on, inter alia, fraud prevention, the intake process, handling of sexual exploitation and abuse allegations, and staff vacancies.

64. The Committee has focused on the status of the central intake process and enquired with OIOS as to whether its proposed intake system would be able to handle all Secretariat intake requirements. OIOS informed the Committee that, although the acquired system could handle such functionality from a technical standpoint, it was not scoped into the existing arrangement. **As noted in its prior recommendations and discussed further in paragraph 89, the Committee believes that a central intake system is essential to ensuring the completeness of reporting of the universe of all potential and actual investigations. This will also contribute to a more accurate reporting of fraud and presumptive fraud, an issue that the Board of Auditors, the Joint Inspection Unit and OIOS have raised as a serious problem.**

65. **In the light of the recognized importance of having a strong OIOS, the Committee recommends that the General Assembly mandate a holistic review of the Office. The review should have a strong implementation mandate to strengthen and streamline the operations and structure of all three divisions of OIOS. It would assess long-standing issues; opportunities to improve collaboration across the investigation, audit, and inspection and evaluation functions; the high vacancy rate; and inter- and intra-office dynamics, particularly in the Investigations Division, including employee morale, engagement, and working relationships.**

66. **Particular attention should be placed on the Investigations Division. The terms of reference for the comprehensive review should be written in such a way as to obviate the need for the long-awaited terms of reference for strengthening investigation referred to in paragraph 10 (e) of the present report.**

D. Financial reporting

67. Under paragraphs 2 (h) and (i) of its terms of reference, the Committee has the responsibility to advise the General Assembly on the operational implications of the issues and trends apparent in the financial statements of the Organization and the reports of the Board of Auditors, and on the appropriateness of accounting policies and disclosure practices and to assess changes and risks in those policies.

68. During the reporting period, the Committee engaged in discussions with the Board of Auditors, the Under-Secretary-General for Management, the Controller and the Project Director of Umoja on a number of issues relating to financial reporting. The issues discussed included:

(a) Status of implementation of IPSAS in the United Nations, including recent progress, challenges faced and the synchronization of the IPSAS timeline and strategy with that of Umoja;

(b) Benefit realization plans for both IPSAS and Umoja;

(c) Implementation of Umoja, the interdependence of Umoja and full IPSAS implementation, the progress made following the launch of Umoja cluster 3 (United Nations Environmental Programme, United Nations Human Settlements Programme, United Nations Office at Nairobi, Economic and Social Commission for Asia and the Pacific, United Nations Assistance to the Khmer Rouge Trials and

Office for the Coordination of Humanitarian Affairs of the Secretariat) and the challenges ahead, including the launch of Umoja cluster 4;

(d) Internal control system and the United Nations fraud policy.

Implementation of the International Public Sector Accounting Standards and benefits realization

69. With respect to the implementation of IPSAS, the Committee was routinely apprised of the progress made. An overview was provided of the milestones achieved to date, including the finalization of the policy framework and benefits realization, Board of Auditors reviews and receipt of an unqualified audit opinion with respect to the peacekeeping financial statements. The Controller continued to note challenges that the project faced, including the skills needed to ensure IPSAS sustainability, operational processing in Umoja, which was not yet stable, and change "fatigue".

70. Regarding the implementation of IPSAS in non-peacekeeping financial statements, the Controller informed the Committee that volume I ran into several challenges, including an incomplete dry run, externally administered activities that needed to be re-evaluated, and the need to reconcile the IPSAS opening balance with the closing balance under the United Nations system accounting standards. The Controller indicated that, owing to the non-homogeneous nature of the non-peacekeeping operations, in which many of the entities had different governance environments, producing non-peacekeeping statements would be a major challenge.

71. Nevertheless, the Committee was informed that the Board of Auditors had issued an unqualified audit opinion with respect to the non-peacekeeping financial statements.

72. In paragraph 94 of document A/69/304, the Committee indicated that it would review the IPSAS benefit realization plan and make further comments in subsequent reports. The Committee has since received updates, including on the approval by the Management Committee of the benefits realization for IPSAS at the end of 2014. The Committee was also informed that the translation of the plan into detailed tracking/reporting requirements was under way and would be completed in July 2015. In addition, the Controller informed the Committee that other initiatives, such as a training and communication strategy for the benefit realization, would be finalized in the third quarter of 2015.

73. The Committee was informed that five qualitative benefits had been identified: improved stewardship of assets and liabilities; improved consistency and comparability; availability of more comprehensive information on costs; increased transparency and accountability; and alignment with best practices.

74. **The Committee welcomes the progress that the Secretariat has made in implementing IPSAS, including the finalization of the benefits realization plan and the articulation of the major benefits. The Committee looks forward to receiving details of those and other quantitative benefits from IPSAS, which, as noted in paragraph 93 of document A/69/304, were to be realized in conjunction with the full implementation of Umoja.**

Implementation of Umoja

75. With respect to Umoja, the Committee held several sessions with the Project Director on the progress made thus far. The Project Director informed the Committee that there had been good progress and that the project was on schedule, albeit with some challenges. The progress was exemplified by the launch of Umoja to cluster 3 on 1 June 2015 and the production of actual financial statements for peacekeeping operations for 2013/14. Preparations to roll out the Umoja solution to the rest of the Secretariat (cluster 4) on 1 November 2015 were on track, although that was a very challenging milestone.

76. The Committee was informed that Umoja was now the daily solution being used by approximately 11,800 users in six departments and offices and in 33 peacekeeping operations and special political missions. Of those, approximately 7,500 were users of the employee and manager self-service portal. The Committee was also informed that, after decades of working out of silos, the realization was growing across the Organization that all the various entities had to work more closely together, given that Umoja was a fully integrated, enterprise-wide solution that required entities to work as one, moving away from functional and organizational silos.

77. The Committee was informed that the adoption of the new operating model was going well; however, the project had to contend with some issues as a result. For example, while the need for proper training of staff at all levels was underscored, the Umoja team did not have the capability to handle both implementation and post-implementation support, hence resources were stretched. The need for training and capacity-building, including on change management, across the Organization would likely be an ongoing issue for the next few years.

78. Accordingly, the Committee was informed that, in spite of the progress made to date, the project remained a high-risk undertaking and the ability to achieve organizational readiness by adopting all the changes that would be needed as a result of Umoja implementation continued to be a challenge. **The Committee welcomes the progress achieved in implementing Umoja and reiterates its recommendation that management continue to rigorously monitor key milestones and the overall timeline for implementation by identifying and managing current and any emerging key risks to the achievement of the objectives of the Umoja project.**

Internal control system and anti-fraud policy

79. In paragraph 105 of its most recent report (A/70/5 (Vol. I)), the Board of Auditors underscored the fact that the complex and risk-prone environment in which the United Nations operated demanded that a strong internal control framework and risk management system be in place. The Controller informed the Committee that the Secretariat was working with the United Nations system to share best practices on internal controls and that the Secretariat's internal controls were being evaluated and re-engineered in the context of Umoja.

80. The Committee was informed that the Secretariat expected to have a plan in place by mid-2015 to document the internal control framework and develop management assurance systems to test understanding and compliance. The

Committee was also informed that the Controller planned to append a statement of internal control to the financial statement by 2018.

81. **The Committee commends the progress made to improve the internal control system and stresses the significance of educating managers and all affected staff on the importance of strong internal controls. The Committee also urges management to draft a manual on internal control that will provide guidance to United Nations managers and staff on implementing and maintaining the forthcoming framework. The Committee will follow up on the issue at subsequent sessions.**

82. With respect to fraud, the Committee has long opined on the importance of dealing with and preventing fraud. In paragraphs 57 and 58 of its report for the period from 1 August 2011 to 31 July 2012 (A/67/259), the Committee noted that the low level of investigated cases dealing with procurement could suggest a failure to detect fraud. In document A/69/304, the Committee recommended that OIOS establish a fully integrated long-term strategic plan that addressed, inter alia, the challenges and tendencies of procurement fraud apparent in the financial statements of oversight bodies.

83. The issue of fraud came to the forefront when OIOS, working in collaboration under a memorandum of understanding with the Risk Management Unit of the United Nations country team for Somalia, received reports of suspicious activities involving funding for humanitarian aid in Somalia. OIOS also conducted an audit of the process of reporting cases of fraud or presumptive fraud in financial statements from October 2013 to January 2014.[2] In the report, it was noted that existing policies and procedures were fragmented and did not provide adequate guidance for identifying and reporting fraud. According to OIOS, one collective weakness of the Organization's policies was the lack of a definition of fraud or presumptive fraud. OIOS recommended that management, in consultation with other departments and offices, finalize the policy on fraud to provide comprehensive and easily accessible guidance to all parties on all aspects of fraud.

84. The Board of Auditors agreed with OIOS, noting in its report on the financial statements of the United Nations for the biennium ended 31 December 2013 (A/69/5 (Vol. I)) that the Organization did not have a single anti-fraud and corruption policy. Current policies did not define fraud or provide a single set of procedures to follow if wrongdoing was suspected, the Board reported. It recommended that the Administration review and rationalize the current suite of policy and guidance material on fraud and other misconduct to provide staff and others with clarity concerning the correct procedures to follow when fraud is discovered.

85. Furthermore, in its previous reports, the Joint Inspection Unit had looked at fraud from different perspectives, such as oversight and accountability functions, related investigative functions, and issues on corporate ethics. The Committee was informed that the Unit was reviewing fraud prevention and detection in the United Nations system. The Committee looks forward to that report.

86. The Committee recalls paragraph 15 of resolution 69/249 A, in which the General Assembly noted with concern general deficiencies identified by the Board in control and fraud prevention, which were particularly necessary given the high-

[2] Audit of the process of reporting cases of fraud or presumptive fraud in financial systems (report 2014/051).

risk environments in which the United Nations operated, and requested the Secretary-General to take measures to address those deficiencies, such as through the issuance of standard operating procedures for addressing fraud prevention.

87. The Controller provided the Committee with her perspective on the Board's concern about underreporting of fraud. According to current policies, if an office or department suspected fraud, it informed the Controller. OIOS and the Office of Human Resources Management also provided fraud information to the Controller, who in turn submitted a consolidated list to the Board. The Controller informed the Committee of the difficulty in reconciling the records of both offices with those provided by other departments owing to such factors as different phases of the cases; different recording systems and methodologies; redaction of confidential information; and different interpretations of fraud and presumptive fraud. The Controller also informed the Committee that there was currently no mechanism to ensure compliance, let alone completeness of reporting of fraud.

88. Management informed the Committee that it was working on a fraud policy that would be finalized by the end of 2015. The policy would establish the means to improve the completeness and accuracy of information reported and strengthen mechanisms to collect and reconcile cases of fraud and presumptive fraud. Management also believed that Umoja would provide a better means of control through reporting using business intelligence.

89. **In the light of the above, the Committee recommends that the Administration finalize the scoping of the central intake system as recommended by the Board in paragraph 148 of document A/69/5 (Vol. I). This, as mentioned in paragraph 64 above, should help with the completeness and accuracy of reporting of fraud and presumptive fraud. The Committee also notes the progress that management has made and urges that the matter be handled most expeditiously, including clearly defining fraud. The Committee also recommends that the finalization of the anti-fraud policy should not be an end in itself but only the first step in ensuring that the anti-fraud policy and internal control framework are effectively implemented.**

E. Coordination among United Nations oversight bodies

90. During the reporting period, in addition to its regularly scheduled meetings with OIOS, the Committee met with other oversight bodies, such as the Joint Inspection Unit and the Board of Auditors, including the Audit Operations Committee. The dialogue allowed for the sharing of perspectives on matters of mutual concern and provided a useful opportunity for cooperation among United Nations oversight bodies.

91. The Committee also sought input from management with respect to the coordination of programmes of work of the oversight bodies. The Committee was informed that, in management's view, more needed to be done.

92. Within its mandate, the Committee sought comments from the three oversight bodies, all of which underscored the existing coordination mechanisms among themselves, including the sharing of their programmes of work. In separate meetings with the Board of Auditors, the Joint Inspection Unit and OIOS, the Committee noted the positive relationship fostered through the tripartite

coordination meetings of the oversight bodies and the sharing of workplans in an effort to avoid duplication. The Committee believes that such coordination provides a valuable platform for additional opportunities.

93. The Committee reviewed with great interest the OIOS report entitled "Thematic evaluation of monitoring and evaluation of the Millennium Development Goals: lessons learned for the post-2015 era" (E/AC.51/2015/3). In that report, it was found that "in looking forward towards a prospective monitoring and evaluation framework for the sustainable development goals, a multi-tiered system linking country, regional and global levels will be needed".

94. OIOS recommended that the Secretary-General formulate an overarching strategy and action plan to support coherent, coordinated and timely monitoring and evaluation, together with relevant capacity development needed to support decision-making, along the path to the achievement of the sustainable development goals.

95. **The Committee is encouraged that such monitoring and evaluation efforts appear to be well under way. As part of that, and without prejudice to the Secretary-General's consideration of the OIOS recommendations, the Committee urges OIOS, as part of the central role that it plays in the Meeting of Representatives of Internal Audit Services of the United Nations Organizations and Multilateral Financial Institutions and the United Nations Evaluation Group, to work with its counterparts in other United Nations audit and evaluation organizations to develop a coordinated strategy for the monitoring and assessment of United Nations performance in delivering on its commitments as part of the implementation of the forthcoming sustainable development goals.**

96. **A coordinated strategy may identify opportunities to make progress on a recommendation in the Committee's previous annual report (A/69/304) that oversight bodies consider developing short topical or organizationally focused fact sheets that succinctly bring together in one place short synopses by each of the oversight bodies that are relevant to the topic or organization, particularly where the oversight bodies have examined similar topics. The intent is to bring together the collective good work of the oversight bodies in one place so that decision makers and stakeholders can more easily see the key matters that need to be addressed. That synergy will go a long way towards strengthening the oversight regime of the Organization and thereby contribute to improvements in effectiveness, transparency and accountability.**

97. **In addition, the Meeting of Representatives of Internal Audit Services and the United Nations Evaluation Group could reach out to and explore, consistent with respective mandates, cooperation with the International Organization of Supreme Audit Institutions, which serves as an umbrella organization for the external national government audit community and enjoys special consultative status with the Economic and Social Council. Pursuant to General Assembly resolution 69/228 on promoting and fostering the efficiency, accountability, effectiveness and transparency of public administration by strengthening supreme audit institutions, the umbrella organization and its member institutions, in accordance with their individual national mandates, are preparing to fulfil the sustainable development goal audit and oversight roles envisioned for them under that resolution.**

98. **The Committee believes that opportunities may exist for United Nations internal audit and evaluation organizations to coordinate with the International Organization of Supreme Audit Institutions and interested member institutions so that the individual reviews that they each may undertake will, over time, provide the United Nations and national decision makers with a more complete picture of progress towards the sustainable development goals and what can still be done.**

F. Cooperation and access

99. The Committee reports that it received cooperation from OIOS and senior management in the Secretariat, including the Department of Management, in discharging its responsibilities. The Committee was given appropriate access to staff, documents and information that it needed in order to undertake its work. The Committee is pleased to report that it continued to work closely with the Joint Inspection Unit and the Board of Auditors. The Committee looks forward to continued cooperation with the entities with which it interacts in order to discharge its responsibilities, as set out in its terms of reference, in a timely manner.

IV. Conclusion

100. In the context of its terms of reference, the Independent Audit Advisory Committee presents the preceding observations, comments and recommendations, as contained in paragraphs 17, 24, 33, 36, 42, 45, 46, 53, 57, 59, 62 to 66, 74, 78, 81, 89 and 95 to 98, for the consideration of the General Assembly.